LAW, RELIGION AND THE PROPHETIC METHOD OF SOCIAL CHANGE

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(Translated by Afra Jalabi)

I. INTRODUCTION

We live in a world in which four fifths of its population live in frustration while the other fifth lives in fear. The United Nations, our world's "figleaf," does not hide the shame of humanity but rather scandalizes humanity's malaise. It is troubling that the League of Nations and the United Nations were born after two world wars. Humanity's unity should come as a natural birth and not as the result of a caesarian section, i.e., through violent global wars. This is reminiscent of the ages of epidemics. Then, because of ignorance about the causes behind these illnesses, plagues swept through communities, leaving millions of dead behind. Yet, after technology made it possible for us to see smaller forms of life and medicine brought us a better understanding of germs, communities became better equipped to halt disease and heal the sufferers. If a country now is devastated by an epidemic, we blame it on the lack of sufficient hygiene. So too, the wars that erupt here and there are caused by ignorance of the intellectual organisms that infect communities with hate and influence people to commit atrocities. In today's world, relying on science, we concern ourselves with preventing germ warfare while sheltering the intellectual viruses that destroy us: our intellectual foods are still polluted. We cannot afford to continue to be confused or ignorant about these invasive germs.

In this article, I will shed some light on the root causes of the historical and religious violence that have afflicted humanity. Because one cannot understand religion or law without having a true understanding of humankind, I must first discuss the Islamic understanding of humanity, whose existence necessitates both the disciplines of law and religion. Two distinct, but intertwining, foundational perspectives govern the way in which Islam understands humans' relationship with their reality: a biological, psychological and historical perspective, which is available to human reason; and a religious perspective revealed in the Qur'an.

II. AN UNDERSTANDING OF OUR EXISTENCE

Only through perception can we understand our existence, and inasmuch as religion is a perception, we can only understand it through symbols.

The vast difference between reality and our perceptions can be illustrated in the history of humankind's misinterpretation of the sun's role in causing day and night. That misinterpretation, held by humankind at large for centuries, was so deeply rooted that people were ready to die for it and to send those who publicly doubted it to their death. Indeed, Galileo Galilee (1564-1642) was eventually coerced to withdraw his dissent to the common misinterpretation with his hand on the Bible. Ironically, then, the sun, which is humanity's central metaphor for glaring clarity, is also our biggest historical metaphor of human misconception.

Given this, can there ever be an interpretation immune to fallacy, for which people could be sent to their death?

The evidence of our perceptual errors makes it possible to distinguish two worlds: a world in which we live, of which we are part; and a world that we construct in our minds. These worlds, real, biologically perceived, and imagined, have always been central subjects of debate throughout the history of thought.

Humanity is now keen to understand its own journey, and its knowledge of itself and of its environment increases daily. Humankind's potential to exercise control over its environment lies in the nervous system, which absorbs and transmits experience to others through speech. It is the nervous system that enabled humanity to expand its knowledge. But what is so incredible about the human species is our ability to name things, as the French anthropologist Levi Strauss points out in his writings[1]. Yet, the power of naming, or attaching

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[1]. "Primitive people, Levi-Strauss tells us, have a passion for naming, classifying and establishing relations between things." Peter Caws, What is Structuralism?, in Claude LeviStrauss: The Arsthropoligist as Hero 196 (E. Nelson Hayes & Tina Hayes, eds., Cambridge, Mass: The M.I.T. Press 1970). For an example of the extent of naming and its importance, see generally Claude Levi-Strauss, The Savage Mind 1-9, 39-43, 172-216 (Chicago: U. of Chi. Press 1966).

symbols to what surrounds us, is also what has created a profound and deep disconnection of humanity from the rest of beings.

A human being is the only living creature that comes to life without the knowledge required for his or her survival, acquiring it later, unlike other organisms that seem to be born with their behavior and survival needs programmed genetically. Yet, human beings carry the ability to acquire knowledge through the socialization and upbringing which society provides to them. This potential to acquire knowledge has engendered a vast expansion of human understanding of ourselves and our environment. Our knowledge now stretches to the edges of time and space. Time has expanded to more than 20 billion years. We have reached the molecule as well as the secrets of existence in its genetic design. We can compare creatures with magnificent huge bodies and incredibly small brains that inhabited our planet 70 million years ago with ourselves as a species, with a small fragile body and large brain, and we can also imagine the kinds of creatures who will inhabit the earth 10 million years from now.

We now are also aware that humanity stretches back more than 3 million years, as the bones of Lucy indicate; the life of our species preexists the discovery of fire, and the domestication of animals and agriculture. We are aware that there was a time when humans were, like other creatures, unable to significantly influence or direct their lives, even to produce their own food. Perhaps that is why we say in Islam that the 8th day of existence has started with the expansion of our knowledge.

To the extent humanity understands its history, it will understand its future and its potential capacities. Just as we can see in an infant who cannot fend for himself the promise of what he will become, so we must guard against that momentary look at our species that put us in doubt, confusion and despair, a moment when a holistic vision of the future is missing. That moment makes so many intellectuals pessimistic because they do not understand the nature of humanity's journey: they focus on human drawbacks, refusing to see the incessant creativity and innovation that mark human history. Yet, with a deep understanding of the past, which stretches into the future, humankind may gain an optimistic outlook and an admiration for the laws that govern our universe and thus be lifted from its pessimism. In fact, we could say that a person is human to the extent that person knows about humanity: extensive historical knowledge is the soul of humanity.

The decisive evolution that set humanity apart from the rest of living creatures was our ability to use nervous and vocal systems to transfer experience or `knowledge' to others, to communicate through an aural symbol. After our nervous system absorbs things through visual symbols, we are capable of translating all `visual' experience to `aural' symbols that can be transmitted to

another person, and those symbols, in turn, are turned into visual ones again through the invention of writing. Writing became the great human economy, preventing the waste of experience at the death of the one who carries the experience. It is striking that this invention that saved individual experience is still relatively new in our history, perhaps 5,000 years old, and paper, which facilitated the progress of writing, is barely over one thousand years old, while digital preservation of information is only a few decades old.

Despite this wonder, as we have learned that we must acknowledge the possibility of error in transmitting knowledge, we have lost confidence that we can even transmit anything at all accurately. The possibility for error led our age to nihilism, much like the old Sophists[2]. But such a refusal to acknowledge the possibility of truth and meaning is an exaggerated response to our ability to err. For example, we may misconceive of the movement of the sun, but the sun will not change its course to fit our misconceptions, nor will it be affected by them. It will continue following its own law. Similarly, we may misunderstand a spoken phrase or a written sentence, even in a holy book, for it is only through our perceptions that we connect to this world, and religion is such a perception, received through symbols.

Yet, the objective reality, the truth that the holy texts and our reality tell us, does not change because we are mistaken, for the laws that govern our world do not change to fit our misconceptions. The inadequacy of our signifying symbols in transmitting the meaning of experience can be overcome if we turn to contemplate that which is signified, and do not simply focus on the signifying symbol or our perceptions of it. It is the objective living world that we must turn to, a world that does not change its course, for the laws of existence do not err, no matter how mistaken we are in understanding or interpreting them. Given this, we can analyze the problematics of text, symbol, and signifier, all which are central in discussing the religious point of view, and can verify what its signifiers should be by turning to the sl~jects they signify.

The ability to symbolize distinguishes humans from the rest of living creatures and enables humanity to move on a course of continual understanding, expanding information about the laws of the universe and how it can be utilized by human beings. Symbols permit us to differentiate between the entities surrounding us and our perceptions of them. The Qur'an and the Bible both refer to this need for mediating language to differentiate entities from our perception of them. For instance, the Bible notes:

> *In all this teaching to the crowds Jesus spoke in parables; indeed he never spoke to them except in parables. This was to fulfill the saying of the prophet: `I will open my mouth in*

[2] *2. See Frederick Copleston, S.J., 1 A History of Philosophy 81-86 (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press 1946); 7 Ency. of Phil. Sophists 494 (N.Y.: The MacMillan Co. & the Free Press 1967).*

parables; I will utter things kept secret since the world was made.' (Matt 13:3435)[3]

And in the Qur'an we see, "And such are the Parables We set forth for people, But only those who understand them who have knowledge." (Surah 29 A1 `Ankabut: 43)[4]

In these passages, we can see the interconnection between a reality that maintains its laws, our own mental perception of it and our spoken or written symbols for reality. We cannot benefit from symbols without experience, and we cannot benefit from experience if we cannot transmit it through symbols. The center of human creativity consists in the fact that our species has freed itself from transmitting its experiences genetically and can transmit them through visual and aural symbols. Hence, neither the truth of revelation nor that of experience can be transmitted to another human except through symbols. Because of our capacity for error, we must also acknowledge that the one sent to prophesy, the revealed book and the person receiving revelation are all subject to the same misconceptions that affected our understanding of the movement of the earth and sun. Without returning constantly to observe the objective world from which we created our perceptions, we can never fully rely on a mental construct, nor on aural-visual symbols; nor can we find our own sight and hearing usefizl or reliable.

This continuous connection and disconnection between our mental perceptions and the objective world is a central issue in the religious life of humanity, particularly because it is harder to discern the separation of signifier and signified in religious experience. We could say that religion, the infinite or the sacred, addresses us in two languages: the language of laws, which govern our existence, and the language of symbols, which illustrate the universe through interpretation. But it is important to distinguish signifier and signified: if the word "fire" were really fire, it would burn the tongue that utters it and the paper on which it is written. In order for us to keep in mind both the connection and distinction between perception and the world, we must continue to refer to and seek out the external world through symbols or books which put us in touch with the knowledge which has been already acquired through others' experiences.

As we interact with the outside world, we discover that it has its laws: beneficial outcomes are sifted through long processes of classification and

[3] *3. For Biblical references, The Revised English Bible (Oxford: Oxford U. Press 1989) was used. In addition, The Holy Bibie, The Authorized King James Version (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Pub. House 1962) was also consulted for specific terms and verses.*

[4] *4. For Qur'aruc references, The Holy Qur'an (Abdullah Usuf `Ali trans., Brentwood, Md: Amana Corp. t989) was used. While this version was used as the source for Qur'anic verses, some changes were made to maintain the accuracy and integrity of the original Arabic text of the Qur'an.*

counting. Similarly, symbol-making has its laws. And despite the incredible utility of symbols, the outcome of our search for truth does not come from the symbols themselves: the real reference is in the outside world to which they refer.

One of humanity's greatest needs is to both connect and disconnect the sacred and the worldly just as we connected and disconnected reality from our own mental constructs of it. We need to see the relationship between signifier and signified. We might thus look at the entire universe as a symbol of the creator. In this case the direction of reference is somewhat different because, in this case, we recognize the sacred through the worldly. This can happen because it is through the universe that we acquire knowledge about the sacred.

III. THE UNITY OF PROPHECY

In the Qur'an, prophets are presented as of one mold. Their world is one, even if diversified, dispersed, and different. Indeed, the Qur'an indicates that the Prophets received one and the same call; they came with one and the same message, and their community (ummah) was one. The following Qur'anic verse suggests this view by poetically reciting certain facts repetitively:

> *We sent Noah to his people. He said: `O my people! Worship God! You have No Other god but Him.' (Surah 7 Al A'raf: 59) To `Ad (We sent) Hud, one of their (own) brethren: He said: `Oh my people! Worship God! Ye have no other god but Him . . . .' (Surah 7 A1 A'raf : 65) To Thamud (We sent) Salih, one of their brethren: He said: `O my people! Worship God; ye have no other god but Him.' (Id. at 73) "To Madyan We sent Shu'ayb, one of their brethren; he said: `O my~eople! Worship God; Ye have no other god But Him.' (Id. at 85)*[5]

[5] . *In the same Surah we read: "Such were the towns whose story We (thus) relate unto you: There came indeed to them their messengers with clear signs. But they would not believe what they had rejected before . . . ." Surah 7 A1 A'raf: 101. "Then after them We sent Moses with our signs To Pharaoh and his chiefs. But they wrongfully rejected them: So see what was the end of those who made mischief." Id. at 103.*

In the Qur'an there is an entire chapter, (Surah) called the Surah of the Prophets (Al Anbiya') relating to the chain of prophecy. In that chapter we read: "In the past We granted to Moses and Aaron the Criterion (for judgement), and a Light and a Message for those who are pious." Surah 21 A1 Anbiya': 48. "This is a blessed message which We have sent down: will you then reject it? We bestowed aforetime on Abraham his rectitude of conduct (guidance), and well were We acquainted with Him." Id. at 50-51. "And We bestowed on him Isaac And, as an additional gift, (A grandson), Jacob, and We Made righteous of every one of them. And We made them leaders, guiding by our command, and We revealed to them to do good deeds, to establish regular prayers; And to practise regular charity; and they were our worshippers." Id at 72-73. "And Noah, when he cried aforetime; We responded to him (listened to his prayer) and delivered him and his family from great distress." ld. at 76. "And David and Solomon, when they give judgement . . . . To theirjudgement We were witness." Id. at 78. "And Job, when he cried to his Lord, `Truly distress has seized me. But Thou are the Most Merciful of those that are Merciful."' Id. at 83. "And Islmai'il, Idris, and Dhu al Kitl, all were of consta.ncy and patience." Id. at 85. "And Dhu al Nun (Jonah], when he departed in wrath; he imagined that We had no power over him. But he cried through the depths

Although the Qur'an recreates the dia]ogue of a given prophet with his nation, it also groups al] prophets as speaking the same languagethat which constitutes the essence of their call[6]. The Qur'an, thus, creates a chain of prophethood[7], and places the highest emphasis on the unity of this chain of prophets, their message and their community:

Then, We sent our messengers in Succession: every time there came to a nation their messenger, they accused him of falsehood; so We made them follow each other, and then, We made them tales. So away with a people that will not believe. T'hen We sent Moses and his brother Aaron, with our verses (signs) and authority manifest, to Pharaoh and his Chiefs: but these behaved insolently: they were an arrogant people. They said: Shall we believe in two men like ourselves? And their people are subject to us!' So, they accused them of falsehood, and they became of those who were destroyed. And We gave Moses the Book, in order that they might be enlightened (guided). And We made the son of Mary and his mother as a sign. We gave them both Shelter on high ground, affording rest and security and fumished with springs. O you messengers! Enjoy (all) things good and work righteousness; for I am all knowing with (all) that you do. And verily this community of yours is a single community. And I am your Lord. Therefore be pious. But they [the followers]

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of darkness, `There is no god but You: Glory to You: I was indeed one of those who are unjust."' Id. at 87. "And Zakariya, when he cried to his Lord; `O my Lord! Leave me not without offspring, though You are the best of inheritors.' So We responded (to his prayer) And We granted him Yahya [John]: We cured his wife for him. These (three) were quick in emulation, in good wotks; they used to call on us with longing (love) and reverence, and humble themselves before Us." Id. at 89-90. "And her (Mary) who guarded her chastity; We breathed into her of our Spirit, and We made her and her son a sign for all worlds (people). Verily, this nation of yours is a single nation, and I am your Lord: therefore worship me. But (later generations) tore off their affairs (of unity) one from another; (yet) will they all return to Us." Id. at 91-93.

These Qur'anic texts indicate that the world of prophets was one, and that they came with one call. "We sent Moses with our signs (and the command): `Bring out your people from the depths of darkness into light, and remind them of the days of God. Verily in this there are signs for such as are firmly patient and constant-grateful and appreciative. "' Surah 14 Ibrahim: 5.

There is also in the same Surah:

Has not the story reached you, of those who (went) before you? Of the people of Noah, and `Ad, and Thamud? And those who (came) after them? None knows them but God. To them came Messengers with clear signs; but they put their hands up to their mouths, and said; `We do deny (the mission) on which you have been sent, and we are really in suspicious doubt as to that to which you invite us.' Id. at 9.

[6] . The Qur'an recites:

Their messengers said: `Is there a doubt about God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth? It is He who invites you, in order that He may forgive you your sins and give you respite for a term appointed.' They said: `Ah! You are no more than human, like ourselves! You wish to turn us away from what our fathers worshiped: then bring us some clear authority (reference).' Their messengers said to them; `True, we are human like yourselves, but God does grant His grace to such of His servants as He wills. It is not for us to bring you an authority except as God permits. And on God let all believers put their trust. No reason have we why we should not put our trust on God. Indeed He has guided us to the ways we (follow). We shall certainly bear with patience all the hurt you cause us. For those who put their trust should put their trust on God.' Id at 10-12.

[7] . After the story of Noah, it says: "Then, We raised after them another generation. And We sent to them (each) a messenger from among themselves, (saying), `Worship God! You have no other god but Him. Will you not fear."' Surah 23 A1 Mu'minun: 31-32.

tore off their affair (of unity) between them, into sects: each party rejoices in that which it has. But leave them in their confused ignorance for a time. (Surah 23 Al Mu'minun: 44-54)

These verses repeatedly insist on the unity of prophethood, the unity of prophetic messages, and the unity of the Prophets' community. We also learn that, once the prophets were gone, this community was fragmented and torn apart. Yet, those belonging to its various fragments are content in its fragmentation and brokenness:

> *These are some of the stories of communities, which We relate unto you: of them some are standing and some have been mown down (by the sickle of time).*
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> *It was not We who were unjust to them. They were unjust to themselves. Their deities whom they invoked profited them no wit when there issued the decree of thy Lord. Nor did they add aught (to their lot) but perdition.*
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> *Such is the chastisement of you Lord when He chastised the villages (communities) in the midst of their injustice. Grievous indeed and severe is his chastisement.*
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> *In that is a sign for those who fear the penalty of the hereafter. That is a day for which humankind will be gathered together. That will be a day of testimony. (Surah 11 Hud : 100-103)*

These peoples do not sense that this brokenness among themselves is evidence that they have lost what the prophets had called for: God's monotheism, the unity of their community and the unity of the content of the prophetic message[8].

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[8] *8. In Sura A1 `An'am, it is said: "Lo! Abraham said to his father Azar: `Do you take idols for gods? For I see you and your people in manifest error.' So did We show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, that he might have certitude." Surah 6 A1 An'am: 74-75.*

The Qur'an follows the dialogue between Ibrahim and his nation. It, then, says:

That was our reasoning (proof) about Us, which We gave to Abraham (to use) against his people. We raise whom We will, degree after degree, for your Lord is full of Wisdom and knowledge. We gave him Isaac and Jacob: all (three) We guided. And before him, We guided Noah and among his progeny, David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, and Aaron. T'hus do We reward those who are compassionate. And Zakariyya and John, and Jesus and Elias, all in the ranks of the Righteous. And Isma'il and Elisha, and Jonah, and Lot. And all We favored above the nations. And to their fathers, and progeny and brethren, We chose them, and We guided them to a straight way. This is the Guidance of God. He gives that guidance to whom He wills of his worshippers. If they were to join other gods with Him, all that they did would be vain for them. These were to whom We gave the Book, and authority and prophethood. If these (their descendants) reject them, behold! We shall entrust their charge to a new people who will not belie them. T'hose were (the prophets) who received God's guidance. Copy the guidance they received. Say: `No reward for this do I ask of you. This is no less than a message for the worlds (people).' Id. at 83-90.

The Qur'an stresses this prophetic unity and its message by saying: "Generations before you were destroyed whey they became unjust. Their messengers came to them with clear signs, but they would not believe!

Then the Qur'an states: "And We sent Moses, with our clear signs (verses) and an authority manifest unto Pharaoh and his chiefs. But they followed the command of Pharaoh, and the command of Pharaoh was not of guidance." (Id. at 96-97)

The Qur'an, therefore, prohibits us from distinguishing or privileging one prophet above another, for all prophets are unified and share common traits. In verse after verse, the Qur'an commands that its followers believe in all prophets, for example:

> *The Messenger believed in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the believers each believes in God, his angels, his books, and his messengers. `We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of his messengers.' And they say: `We hear, and we obey. (We seek) Your forgiveness. Our Lord, and to You is all destination[9].' (Surah 2 A1 Baqarah: 285)*
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> *Those who deny God and his messengers, and (those who) wish to separate God &om his messengers, saying: `We believe in some but reject others.' And (those who) wish to take a course midway. They are in truth (equally) unbelievers (infidels); and we have prepared for unbelievers a humiliating punishment.*

Thus do We requite criminal nations. Then We made you heirs in the earth (the land) after them, to see how you would behave." Surah 10 Yunus: 13-14.

Then it starts with Noah:

Relate to them the story of Noah. Behold! he said to his people: `O my people, if it be hard on you that I should stay (with you) and remind you of God's signs, then to God I commend my trust. Get you then an agreement about your plan and among your partners, so your plan be not to you dark and dubious. Then pass your sentence on me and give me no respite.' Id. at 71.

We see here how Noah subjects himself to rule of law of his society.

Then after him, We sent (many) messengers to their peoples: they brought them clear signs, but they would not believe what they had already rejected beforehand. Thus do We seal the hearts of the transgressors. Then after them sent We Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh and his chiefs with our signs. But they we were arrogant. They were a people in crime. Id. at 74-75.

In Surah Houd, the Qur'an tells the story of Noah with detail, similar to what we have seen above. Then it mentions, in the same fashion as we saw in Surah A1 A'raf, the story of the prophets and how they asked of their people to worship God because they have no god but Him. We also read more about Moses and Pharaoh here.

[9] *The Qur'an recites,*

Say you: `We believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) Prophets from their Lord. We make no difference between one and another of them. And to Him we are submitters (Muslims).' So if they believe as you believe, they are indeed guided, and if they turn back, it is they who are in schism; but God will suffice thee as against them, and He is the all-hearing, the all knowing. Surah 2 A1 Baqarah: 136-137.

There is also:

Say: `We believe in God, and in what has been revealed to us and was revealed to Abraham, Isma'il; Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and in (the Books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the Prophets, from their Lord. We make no distinction between one and another among them and to Him we are submitters (Muslims).' Surah 3 Ali `Imran: 84.

To those who believe in God and his messengers and make no distinction between any of the messengers, We shall soon give their (due) reward: for God is oft-forgiving, most merciful. (Surah 4 A1 Nisa': 150-152)

The Messengers God Did Not Mention

Moreover, the Qur'an expands the circle of messengers, opening the door for the possibility of recognizing messengers even if they were not mentioned in the Qur'an. After specifically naming and describing the traits of messengers, the Qur'an tells us that there are messengers it had not mentioned.

We did aforetime send messengers before you: of them there are some whose story We have related to you, and some whose story We have not related to you. It was not (possible) for any messenger to bring a sign except by the leave of God: But when the command of God issued, the matter was decided in truth, and there perished, there and then, those who stood on falsehoods. (Surah 40 Ghafir: 78)[10]

Admitting the existence of messengers who were not mentioned in the Qur'an opens the door for the possible recognition of others who exhibit the traits of messengers. Thus, for example, after establishing these traits, perhaps we should study Socrates to see whether his determination to live by his ideas and principles and his sense that he had a duty to disseminate them suggests that he is a prophet. We are prevented from denying the possibility of prophecy to other religious and cultural figures.

This approach combats racism and ethnocentrism. It invites us to recognize from every tradition all those who meet the criteria defning what it is to be a messenger, such as the call for justice and equity. It also permits us to agree upon the importance of justice and equity. Recognizing that there are messengers beyond those mentioned in the monotheistic religious texts, or the cultural space into which Abraham and Noah were sent, makes it possible for us to acknowledge the messengers of other cultures, whether in the Far East, Africa, or among the indigenous peoples of the new continents. Many nations and peoples are now looking at their ancient cultural roots as a way of self affirmation and establishing self identity. This approach of recognizing further messengers puts humanity on the path of monotheism through the recognition of what is common among our messengers and sages. It will help foster

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[10] The Qur'an creates this space by stating that it has not related to us the stories of all prophets: "We have sent thee revelation, as We sent it to Noah and the messengers after him: We sent revelation to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave the Psalms. Of some messengers We have already told thee the story; of others We have not-and to Moses God spoke direct; Messengers who gave good news as well as warning, that human, after (the coming) of the messengers, should have no plea against God: for God is exalted in power, Wise." Surah 4 A1 Nisa: 163-165.

These verses also deal with the inclusiveness of prophecy:

cooperation and mutual understanding, and it will create the mutual recognition that we are equal participants in the journey of humanity, for the Qur'an states that there has never been a nation without a messenger:

> *For We assuredly sent amongst every people a messenger, (with the command), `Serve God, and eschew tyranny (evil) ....' (Surah 16 A1 Nahl: 36)*[11] *`Never would We visit with our wrath until We had sent a messenger.' (Surah 17 A1 Isra': 15)*

However, I frequently say that the prophetic vision of the future, which implies competition for the good of humanity, has not reached human consciousness yet (or emerged as a model for human behavior). People have not yet acquired the power to leap intellectually into the prophetic vision, for they get caught in the snares of the past. There, they subvert prophetic competition so that it becomes a contest in evil, a race towards destruction. This failing of humanity we must work towards overcoming at the least possible price.

We must remember the suffering of those who advanced progressive ways for bringing out the best in human beings. Even if most of humanity sees only the road blocks, we can look into history to those pioneers who have been creative in bringing humans to their full potential. The Qur'an gives support and encouragement to sustain the messengers of reform who face difficult obstacles[12].

The messages in the Qur'an repeatedly condemn pessimism, explaining that despair and gloom are not characteristic of believers[13]. The Qur'an also states: "They said: `We give thee glad tidings in truth: be not in despair!' He said: `And who despairs of the mercy of his Lord, but such as go astray?"' (Surah 15 A1 Hijr: 55-56) Rather, the Qur'an encourages an optimistic world-view that sees life as subject to human intervention and control, and considers humans as capable of solving their problems. "And He has subjected to you, as &om Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth: behold, in that are signs indeed for those who reflect." (Surah 45 A1 Jathiyah: 13)

The Qur'anic vision encourages humans to strive in learning the laws of existence so that they can become better equipped to utilize the resources of the universe, including humanity, for a larger good. If we fail to do so, it does not

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[11] See Surah 40 Ghafir: ?8. We also see in the Qur'an the passages: "To every people (we sent) a messenger: when messenger comes (before them), the matter will be judged between them withjustice, and they will ttot wronged (done injustice to)." Surah 10 Yunus: 47. "Verily We sent you in truth, as a bearer of glad tidings, and as a warner: and there never was a people, without a warner having lived among them (in the past)." 5urah 35 Fatir: 24.

[12]The Qur'an recites: "Until, when the messengers give up hope (of their people) and (come to) think that they were treated as liars, there reaches them our help, and those whom We will are delivered into safety. But never will be warded off our punishment from criminal nations." Surah 12 Yusuf: I10.

[13] As the Qur'an says: "(A]nd never give up hope of God's soothing mercy: truly no one despairs of God's soothing mercy, except those who have no faith." Id at 87. '

mean that the universe around us is beyond utility. Rather, it means that we have failed to learn to extract the potential powers in the universe.

The Seal of Prophethood

The Qur'an places emphasis on yet another category of human beings. Just as the Qur'an expanded the messengerial category, it also introduced a new category, that of humans who suffer because of their knowledge and call for justice. The introduction of this category signifies a new historical shift. In Islam, this shift is known as the "seal of prophecy[14]." "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the messenger of God, and the seal of the Prophets: and God has full knowledge of all thing." (Surah 33 Al-Ahzab: 40) This revelation announces the end of the era of traditional prophecy and marks the beginning of the role of the people of knowledge who call for justice and equity. The rise in knowledge and justice makes idealism realistic. It also makes the transcendental capable of being witnessed, the divine human, and the supernatural nomothetic. It renders monotheism a call for justice. Thus, prophecy is merged with knowledge, and reception from God is now through knowledge. The idea of the seal of prophethood is a singularly valuable notion, for it recognizes an evolution in the methodology of the transmittal of knowledge. Its consequences are far-reaching, its prefaces identifiable. It is a shift towards new ways of knowing.

IV. THE HISTORICAL MOVE FROM THE SUPERNATURAL TO A UNIVERSE BASED ON LAWS

"Sunnaniah " (Nomotheticism)

The Qur'an is full of historical laws (or patterns),[15] thus testifying that human history has emerged from the era of the supernatural to "Sunnaniah," the era of nomotheticism; and those with knowledge and call for justice have replaced those from the world of prophecy. People were able to emerge from the supernatural into historicity by tracing the decline of nations and understanding the factors that led to their rise and fall. Even though an orientation toward a universe based on laws was present in all prophetic traditions, the reality of a social life based independently on laws, and departing from the supernatural, arrived late to the lives of people in all societies.

When we compare the testimony of the people of knowledge with divine revelation as we have it, we encounter a startling conclusion: people have reached a new moment in the reception of truth. Unlike critical moments of

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[14] *This term is to be found in Surah 33, which reads: "Those who communicate (preach) the messages of God, and fear Him and fear none but God. And God is enough to call (people) to account." Surah 33 Al-Ahzab: 39.*

[15] *Historical or natural laws are referred to in the Qur'an with the word (sunnah). One of the verses that deals with the immutability of the laws of the universe reads: "[A]re they but looking for the law (sunnah) the ancients were dealt with? But no change will you find in God's law (sunnah); no shitting will you find in God's law (sunnah)." Surah 35 Fatir: 43.*

truth in the past, modern people receive the word of God not primarily through prophetic symbols but through observation of events and the results of history. As those with knowledge inherited the world of prophets when prophecy ended and knowledge remained, so after the scientific came to coexist with the supernatural, the supernatural dissolved and the scientific remained.

Signs of the External World and Verses of the Book

As I have previously suggested, the symbolic signs and external reality are inseparable, for there is no way of grasping reality without the means of symbolic signs. These are the signifier and signified. The Qur'an connects signs of the external world with signs and verses from the Book.[16]

The Qur'an considers the universe, human events and the symbols that intercept them all signs to increase human mastery over existence and even over humanity, permitting humans to understand how to use laws for good and not ill. The Qur'an says it will show us the universe and historical events to provide evidence for divine order and its role in bringing out human potential. Hence, what has been revealed to prophets from the heavens and what those of knowledge discover by exploring the world will validate one another: "Soon will we show them our signs in the horizons, and in themselves, until it becomes manifest to them that it is the truth. Is it not enough that your Lord does witness all things?" (Surah 41 Fussilat: 53)[17]

Yet, unlike the ancient prophets, modern people of knowledge do not support each other's causes in calling forjustice. In fact, the Qur'an foreshadows this

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[16] *In the Bible we read:*

Beware of false prophets, who come to you dressed up as sheep (in sheep's clothingl, but undemeath they are savage wolves. You will recognize them by their fruit. Can grapes be picked from briars, or figs from thistles? A good tree always yields sound fruit, and a poor [corrupt] tree bad [evill fiuit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, or a poor tree sound fruit. A tree that does not yield sound fruit is cut down and thrown on the fire. That is why I say you will recognize them by their fruit. Matt 7:15-20.

The content of this message, if we could specify it, could be the basis to resolving many problems of humanity. Thus, exposing these texts with historical inputs could clarify them more.

[17] *17. This indicates that evidence from the natural world and historical events validate the message of prophets. The Qur'an reads:*

Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the eatth; in the alteration of the night and day; in the sailing of the ships through the sea for the profit of humankind; in the rain which God sends down from the skies, and the life which he gives therewith to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds which trail between the sky and the earth-are indeed signs for a people that reason. Surah 2 A1 Baqarah: 164.

Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alteration of night and day-There are indeed signs for those of hearts. Surah 3 Ali `Imran: 190.

And in Surah 26 A1 Shu'ara', eight historical events are presented with the following comment after each case: "Verily in this is a Sign. But most of them do not believe." This statement is repeated 8 times following these verses: Surah 26 A1 Shu'ara': 8-68, t03-121 139158, 174-190. These same historical events are presented in detail in Surah 7 A1 A'raf, and briefly in Surah 26 or only in names in Surah 50. "Before them derued the people of Noah the companions of the Russ, Thamud. The Ad, Pharaoh, the brethren of Lut, The companions of the Wood, and Tubba'. Each one of them rejected the messengers, and our warning was duly fulfilled." Surah 50 Qaf: 12-14.

crisis in human history, even as it records human fears about the coming of the moment of knowledge.

It recites what happened when those who lived as contemporaries of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) asked him for the supernatural, for miracles, like those brought by previous prophets. We hear the Qur'an's answer: this book is enough evidence for you. As the Surah warns:

They say: `Why are not signs sent down to him from his Lord?' Say: `The signs are indeed with God: and I am indeed a clear (articulate) warner.'

> *And is it not enough for them that We have sent down to you the Book which is recited to them? Verily, in it is mercy and a reminder to a people who believe. (Surah 29 A1 `Ankabut: 50-51)*[18]

Those who refuse this answer, demanding miracles, repudiate the prophetic chain through which the end of the era of prophecy is joined with the beginning of the era of knowledge. The Qur'an tells us to travel through the history of the nations to see what happened to those liars who refused justice among the people. Using historical evidence and reference points as our guide, we see God's condemnation of those of knowledge who give lie to the important truth of the prophetic chain. This chain repudiates any privileged access to special sources of knowledge unavailable to others: "Patterns (laws) have passed away before you: travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who were liars." (Surah 3 Ali `Imran: 137)[19]

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[18] 18. It is said, at other places, this cry for miracles is also rebuked:

Say those without knowledge: `Why does not God speak unto us? Or why does not come unto us a sign? So said the people before them words of similar import. Their hearts are alike. We have indeed made clear the signs unto any people who hold firmly their belief.' Surah 2 A1 Baqarah: 118.

`Nay,' they say, `(these are) medleys of dreams!' `Nay, he forged it!' `Nay he is (but) a poet! Let him then bring a Sign like the ones that were to (prophets) of old!' Surah 21 AI Anbiya': 5.

They said: `We shall not believe in you, until you cause a spring to gush forth for us from the earth. Or (until) you have a garden of date trees and vines, and cause rivers to gush forth in their midst, carrying abundant water. Or you cause the sky to fall in pieces, as you claimed, against us, or you bring God and the angels before (us) face to face. Or you have a house adorned with gold, or you mount a ladder right into the skies. No, we shall not even believe in your mounting until you send down to us a book that we can read.' Say: `Glory to my Lord! Am I aught but a human messenger?' Surah 17 A1 Isra': 90-93.

Now are they but looking for the way the ancients were dealt with? But no change will you find in God's pattern (law). No turning off will you find in God's pattem (law). Surah 35 Fatir: 43.

[19] By using this style of deduction, the evidence and reference point are based on history. In this style, the Qur'an's reference is historical results:

Do you not see how your Lord dealt with `Ad. Of the (city of) Iram, with lofty pillars, The like of which were not produced in (all) the land. And with Thamud, who cut out rocks in the valley. And with Pharaoh, Lord of stakes. (All) these transgress~ beyond bounds in the lands. And heaped therein mischief (on mischief). Therefore did your Lord pour on them a scourge of diverse chastisements: For your Lord is (as a guardian) on a watchtower. Surah 89 A1 Fajr: 6-14.

Such were the villages (populations) we destroyed when they committed iniquities; but We fixed an appointed time for their destruction. Surah 18 A1 Kahf: 59.

And We sent Moses, with our (clear) signs and authority manifest, Unto Pharaoh and his chiefs: but they followed the command of Pharaoh was no right guide. He will go before his people on the Day of Judgement, and lead them into the fire but woeful indeed will be the place to which they are led! And they

These liars deny a critical moment in human history, the moment of the seal of prophecy, which is an absolute, final departure from the metaphysical, &om a style of receiving knowledge through transcendental means to a scientific method, historical knowledge based on evidence. If we can trace this chain of prophecy, we are empowered to leave the world of the supernatural and enter a scientific world with laws and patterns.

The prophets founded and established the idea of monotheism in their own prophetic style, undergirded by prophetic unity. Those with knowledge are similarly under the sacred obligation to incorporate the central ideas of monotheism into a methodical science and practice. The unity of prophethood is evidenced in the way the prophets confirmed and consolidated each other's messages, predicting those prophets who would follow them just as scientists predict what findings could follow from their experiments. To confirm their unity, the prophets would take a pledge, asking for allegiance from their people, asking them to have faith, to believe and support the coming one. The Qur'an demands no less of them today:

> *Behold! God took the Covenant of the Prophets, (saying): `I give you a Book and wisdom; then comes to you a messenger, confirming what is with you; Do you believe in him and render him help?' God Said: `Do you agree, and take this my Covenant as binding on you?' They said: `We agree.' He said: `Then bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses.'*
>
> *If any turn back after this, they are then the perverted transgressors. (Surah 3 Ali `Imran: 81-82)*

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are followed by a curse in this (life) and on the Day of Judgement: and woeful is the gift which shall be given (unto them)! These are some of the stories of communities which We relate unto you: of them some are standing and some have been mown down (by the sickle of time). It was not We that wronged (were unjust to) them: they wronged themselves. The deities, other than God, whom they invoked profited them no wit when there issued the decree of your Lord: nor did they add aught (to their lot) but perdition! Such is the chastisement of thy Lord when He takes communities in the midst of their injustice: grievous indeed, and severe is his chastisement. In that is a sign for those who fear the penalty of the hereafter: that is a day for which mankind will be gathered together: that will be a Day of Testimony. (Surah 11 Hud: 96-103).

If the Qur'an mentions the ends of nations that were unjust, then the ends of many other nations after the era of the Qur'an provide many historical lessons equally. The message of the historical tales in the Qur'an is clear: if the following lessons were not enough, wait for the coming ones. The law of God does not change in the rise and fall of nations who mistreat people and are unjust to them:

Such were the populations We destroyed when they committed iniquities; but We fixed an appointed time for their destruction. (Surah 18 A1 Kahf: 59).

And how many populations We destroyed, which exulted in their life (of prosperity)! Now those habitations of theirs, after them, are destroyed-all but a few. And We are their heirs. Surah 28 A1 Qasas: 58.

Nor was thy Lord the one to destroy the towns (a population) until He had sent to its center a messenger, reciting to them our signs: nor are We going to destroy town (a population) except when its members are unjust. Id. at 59.

V. MESSENGERS FOR JUSTICE

As I have suggested, just as the Qur'an recognizes the existence of messengers beyond any religion's exclusive lists, it also recognizes those who undergo the suffering of messengers in their attempt to bring humanity out of corruption and bloodshed, those who want to spread justice and compassion among us[20]. Those who call for justice are recognized in the class of messengers, for they are faced with the same call to mission, the most sacred recognized by the Qur'an: "We sent aforetime our messengers with clear signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of right and wrong), that people may stand forth in justice . . . ." (Surah 57 A1 Hadid: 25)

The Qur'an also anticipates the same experience of rejection, enmity, and harm faced by those who call for justice, and pronounces the same penalty on those who oppose them:

> *As to those who deny the signs of God, and in defiance of right, slay the prophets, and slay those calling humankind to justice, announce to them a grievous penalty.*
>
> *They are those whose works will bear no fruit in this world and in the hereafter, nor will they have supporters. (Surah 3 Ali `Imran: 21-22)*[21]

By adding those who call for justice to the list of messengers, the world enters a new era, a new way of knowing, and a new way of reception from God. Divine revelation and the testimony of people of knowledge who call for justice are directly connected: calling for justice is monotheism; it is the thread of unicity in prophetic messages.

The central message of the Qur'an sums up all the prophets' message into one unique expression, used in Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) correspondence with world leaders of his time.

> *Say: `O people of the Book! Come to a word of equity (fair terms) between us and you:*
>
> *That we worship none but God*

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[20] *The Qur'an attests to the hostile reception faced by those who prophesy: "Do they seek for other than the religion of God?" "while all creatures in the heavens and on earth have, willing or unwilling, bowed to his will, and to Him shall they all be brought back." Surah 3 Ali `Imran: 81-83. The Qur'an further states:*

And remember, Jesus, the son of Mary, said: `Oh, children of Israel! I am the messenger of God (sent) to you, confirming the Law (which came) before me, and giving glad tidings of a Messenger to come after me, Whose name shall be Ahmad. (another name for Muhaxnmed).' But when he came to them with clear signs, they said, `This is evident sorcery!' Surah 61 A1 Saff: 6.

21 Similarly, the Qur'an joined the testimony of God and angels to that of the learned ones who call for justice: "There is no god but He: that is the witness of God, his angels, and those endued with knowledge, standing firm on justice. There is no god but He the exalted in power, the wise." Surah 3 Ali `Imran: 18.

That we associate no partners with him (practice polytheism)

That we take not each other as deities other than God.' If they, then, turn back, say ye: `Bear witness that we are Muslims (surrendering to God).' (Id. at 64)[22]

This is the word of eguity, light and heavy at the same time. It is at once apparent and subtle, a stage which cannot be grasped, for when some believe they have reached it, in fact they have moved away &om it as Adam's flight in terror from the Garden reminds us[23]. At the edge of equity, civilizations have collapsed and many have been destroyed. Perhaps we can never approach this world of equity unless we admit our distance from it. For in the Bible we read: "Enter by the narrow gate. Wide is the gate, and broad the road that leads to destruction, and many enter that way"; "Narrow is the gate and constricted that road that leads to life, and those who find them are few." (Matt 7:13-14)

The word of equity is the message of all prophets. After the end of prophecy, this message is the responsibility of those who call for justice, and it is the core of the monotheistic tradition. A devout person's closeness to God is judged by the degree to which he or she is capable of comprehending this message, teaching it and committing to it. The status of any society with God is also dependent on its realization of equity according to the Qur'an[24]: "For the like of this, let all strive, who wish to strive." (Surah 37 A1 Saffat: 61) "Come to a word of equity," the Surah says[25]. The word of equity is to give the other what you give yourself, and to deny yourself what you deny the other. In the Bible, the same notion is presented as a law of the universe: "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled [abased]; and whoever humble himself will be exalted." (Matt 23:12) The Qur'an succinctly sums up this central message of monotheism, the word of equity and the unity of prophets, in two sentences in Surah 16 which call for equity, justice and piety.

For We assuredly sent amongst every nation (community) a messenger, (with the command), "Serve God, and eschew tyranny . . ." (Surah 16 A1 Nahl: 36)

"(God) committed them to a term of piety; and well were they entitled to it and worthy of it . . ." (Surah 48 A1 Fath: 26) This is the core of religion, the essence of truth, and the goal of prophets, messengers, reformers and those of

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[22] The prophet (PBLlH) wrote these leaders letters in which he called on them for what had been revealed to him . In his letters, he included this term, which is captured in the quoted verse.

[23] T'he Bible tells us:

And the Lord God . . . said, `The man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; what if he now reaches out and takes fruit from the tree of life also, and eats it and lives for ever': When he drove him out, God settled him to the East of the garden of Eden, and he stationed the cherubim and a sword whirling and tlashing to guard the way to the tree of life. Gen 3:22, 24.

The flaming sword at the gate of Eden is the narrow gate in Matthew which only few will find.

24 For instance, the Surahs read: "[AJnd for this let the competitors compete." Surah 83 Al Mutaffifin: 26.

25 Surah 3 Ali `Imran: 64.

knowledge. This is what is sacred, what is in all the Books. We read in the Bible: "Always treat others as you would like them to treat you: that is the law and the prophets." (Matt 7:12) It is also what the Qur'an presents[26]. The word of equity was explained in the Qur'an in three ways[27]: (1) that we worship none but God, (2) that we associate no partners with him (will not practice polytheism), (3) and that we take not each other as deities. These explanations are part of an overarching interpretation of the word of equity that subsumes within it the denunciation of tyranny and prohibition of religious coercion:

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26 As just some examples of this word of equity, we might look at the Bible:

How can you say to your brother, `let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own? You hypocrite! First take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's. Matt 7:4-5.

The Qur'an also enunciates this word more specifically:

Woe to those that deal in fraud. Those who, when they have to receive by measure from people, exact full measure, But when they have to give by measure or weight to others, give less than due. Do they not think that they will be called to account? On a Mighty Day, A Day when all humankind will stand before the Lord of the Worlds. Surah 83 Al Mutaffifin: 1-6.

To call forth the demand forjudgment in equity in parallel ways:

Do not judge, and you will not be judged. For as you judge others, so you will yourselves be judged, and whatever measure you deal out of others will be dealt to you. Matt 7:2.

Do you enjoin right conduct on the people, and forget (to practise it) yourselves. And yet you study the Scripture? Will you not reason. Surah 2 Al Baqarah: 44.

Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You pay tithe of mint and dill and c~xnmin; but you have overlooked the weightier demands of the law justice, mercy, and good faith. It these you should have practised, without neglecting the others. Matt 23:23. Perhaps through these comparisons, our level will rise beyond mint and cummin. We, then, will take the law unlike those who `strain off a midge, yet gulp down a camel.' Id. at 23:24.

Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You are like tombs covered with whitewash; they look fine on the outside, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and of corruption. So it is with you: outwardly you look like honest men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness (iniquity]. Id. at 24:27-28.

and lawlessness spreads [because iniquity shall abound], the love of many will grow cold. But whoever endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the earth as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come. Id. at 24:12-14.

In the Qur'an, it is also said:

Say: `Not equal are things that are vile and things that are seemly, even though the abundance of vileness may dazzle you; so fear God, O you that of hearts (understand); that you may prosper.' Surah 5 A1 Ma'idah: 103.

And no one will be granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self restraint, none but persons of greatest good fortune. Surah 41 Fussilat: 35.

It is those who are endowed with hearts (understanding) that remember. Those who fulfill the covenant of God and fail not in their plighted word; Those who join together those which God had commanded to be joined, hold their Lord in awe, and fear the terrible reckoning; Those who patiently persevere, seeking the countenance of their Lord; establish regular prayers; spend, out of what We have bestowed for their sustenance, secretly and openly; and repel off evil with good (compassion): for such there is the attainment of the (etemal) home. Surah 13 A1 Ra'd: 19-22.

[27] And all prophets were sent with the commands to worship God and avoid tyranny (taghut) (domination) and that the word of polytheism is in opposition to the word of equity. We see this clearly stated in these words: "It has already been revealed to you as it was those before you. `If you were to commit polytheism, truly obsolete will be your work, and you will surely be in the ranks of those who lose."' Surah 39 A1 Zummar: 65. It is important to understand that obedience is voluntary; in Surah 2 we read: "There is no coercion in religion . . . .' Surah 2 AlBaqarah 256.

(1) for rushd[28] *(moral and intellectual maturity) stands out as clearly distinct from wickedness (ghay). (2) Whoever rejects tyranny and believes in God (3) has grasped the most secure handhold, that never breaks loose. (Surah 2 A1 Baqarah: 256)*

The word of equity is also the witness that `there is no god, but God.'

Thus, the Qur'an warns that those who cross the boundaries of justice into oppression by dominating and overpowering others (the verb "tagha" is significant since many people, including even Arabs, do not always understand the relationship between the verb "tagha" and the term "taghut," and since the term "taghut" is used throughout the document perhaps a footnote about the verb should be placed under the first time the term "taghut" appears) "spread (heap) therein corruption (mischief)." (Surah 89 A1 Fajr: 11-12) The story of Pharaoh and Moses is the paradigmatic story in the Qur'an of both tyranny and "speaking to power." Mentioned numerous times, the name Pharaoh ceased to be simply the name of an individual and became instead a symbolic reference to all domination that violated the precepts of equity[29]. "Truly Pharaoh elated himself in the land and broke up its people into sects, dominating (depressing) a group among them: their sons he slew, their women he enslaved. He was indeed one of the (class ofJ corrupters (on earth)." (Surah 28 Al Qasas: 4)

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[28] *The Arabic term "rushd" has a variety of interrelated meanings which include "(physical) maturity and adulthood." The root word for "rushd" in Arabic means "guidance or reason." The Qur'anic concept of "rushd," however, is ticher in meaning than the corresponding Arabic word. It refers to other less literal and more conceptually sophisticated meanings, such as: moral and spiritual maturity, or political legitimacy. In the Qur'an "rushd" is used to distinguish a certain path or even a model of behavior. For example, the Qur'an describes the Pharoah as someone who was not "rashid." Surah 11 Hud: 97. In other places, the Qur'an states that God will turn away from the "path of rushd" those who are arrogant, and unjustly defiant. Surah 7 Al-A'raf: I46. The word "rushd" is used repeatedly in the Qur'an to embody meanings of reason, guidance and political or social legitimacy in a community. Because of the richness of this Qur'anic term, the editors have opted not to translate i~, but to use the word "rushd" instead throughout the text. This approach preserves the richness of its meaning and maintains the integrity of this Qur'anic concept.*

[29] *"Serve God, and eschew tyranny . . . ." Surah 16 A1 Nahl: 36. Taghut and tughyan comes from the Arabic verb tagha which means to dominate and control; to pass the limits in oppression. The Qut'an uses this verb in relation to the Pharaoh in many instances as we saw in the earlier quotes. This verb was also used in relation to the tribes A'ad and Thamoud in addition to Pharaoh. The longest dialogue in the Qur'an between a prophet and his people is the dialogue between Moses and Pharaoh. The Pharaoh was mentioned in the Qur'an more than 70 times and Moses over I00 times. The struggle of the prophet Moses was with one of the greatest and most domineering civilizations, which has left us the pyramids, a symbols of the power they possessed. Pharaoh, in the Qur'an, is more of an archetype. He was the king, the god whom the Qur'an quoted in phrases that indicate subjugation and conquest, and the division of his people into classes. The Qur'an quotes different utterances by Pharaoh. "He (Pharaoh) said: `I am your Lord, Most High."' Surah 79 A1 Nazi'at: 24. "Pharaoh said: `O chiefs! No god do I know for you but myself . . . ."' Surah 28 A1 Qasas: 38. "Pharaoh said: `If thou dost put forward any god other than me, I will certainly make thee imprisoned."' Surah 26 A1 Shu'ara': 29. And of him: "Truly Pharoah elevated himself in the land and splintered up its people into factions, taking advantage of a weak group among them: their sons he slew, and he kept the women alive, for he was indeed a maker of mishief." Surah 28A1 Qasas: 4.*

The word of equity, the word of monotheism and the order to avoid domination and eschew tyranny all resonate within each other. Similarly, in the Bible the connection between monotheism and equity is clear: the Bible condemns the human mastery over other persons: "And call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ." (Matt 23:9-10)[30]

No Compulsion in Religion

The word of equity implies specifically that there cannot be compulsion in religious matters. As the Qur'an says, in the complicated passage quoted below:

> *There is no coercion in religion: rushd (moral and intellectual maturity) stands out as clearly distinct from ghay (domination, wickedness): who-ever rejects taghut (tyranny) and believes in God, has grasped the most secure handhold that never breaks loose. And God hears And knows all things. (Surah 2 Al Baqarah: 256)*

Thus, the demand that there must be rushd in religion is clarified by the second sentence that there should be "no compulsion" or ghay (domination and wickedness) in religion. Compulsion is thus wickedness and its antithesis, tolerance, is moral and intellectual maturity. The third sentence further explains that any one who rejects taghut, (such as by resisting the temptation to impose his or her religion by force upon others), and believes in God, will have grasped the most secure handhold of all that never breaks loose.

In this verse, we encounter a profound, essential notion: religion should never be spread by means of force or compulsion. Religion is an interpretation of the universe, of existence and everything in it, including the human person, the relationship between humanity and the universe, and relationships among people. And it is also an interpretation of the Supreme Being. The Qur'an demands faith in a particular way that rejects coercive religion.

The Meaning of the Universe & Divine Purpose

The meaning of the universe is evasive. It is something beyond our comprehension. Nevertheless, we can see pmpose in everything from the nucleus to the Galaxy, and in every creature and moment in the evolution of the human species. We can see how the universe is progressing towards an end that is neither arbitrary nor wrong According to the Qur'an, God is beyond human perception: "And there is none like unto Him." (Surah 112 A1 Ikhlas: 4) "[T]here is nothing whatever like unto Him." (Surah 42 A1 Shura: 11) "No

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[30] This verse is from the King James version. This translation is more in accord with the Arabic version. And the verses are more consistent with each other in this translation, since, in this version, God is presented as Father and Master. In the King James, "even Christ" is added to emphasize that no one is called master, even Christ.

vision can grasp Him. But his grasp is over all vision . . . ." (Surah 6 Al An'am: 103) God is the essence of existence, and the meaning of the universe. Faith in God is the secret of existence.

Nevertheless, we sometimes conceive of the universe as lacking w purpose because of a fragmented worldview, one that does not conceive of existence sequentially, nor sees it through time. Many perceive existence as arbitrary and worthy of rejection. When this sense that the world is arbitrary overshadows the glory and beauty of existence, we live disconnected with the world.

> *Did you then think that We had created you in jest (arbitrarily), and that you would not be brought back to us (for account). Therefore exalted be God, the King, the Reality: there is no god but, the Lord of the throne of honour! (Surah 23 A1 Mu'minun: 115-116)*

Consequently, we should reject not existence itself but those who impose upon others the belief that the world is arbitrary. This is what the Qur'an and Bible do. Many respected thinkers advocate such nihilistic ideas and so make others lose their sense of purpose in life and forego any hope of finding a meaning to existence. Both the Qur'an and the Bible warn of such tendencies:

> *`[B]ut who does more wrong than one who concocts a lie against God, to lead astray people without knowledge . . . .' (Surah 6 Al An'am: 144) `[A]nd hinder them from the path of God ....' (Surah 9 Al Tawbah: 34)*

> *The Bible confirms this warning: `Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of Heaven in people's faces; you do not enter yourselves, and when others try to enter, you stop them.' (Matt 23:13) Jesus goes on and calls them the `Blind guides (who) strain off a midge, yet gulp down a camel!' (Matt 23:24)*

Yet, even those who deny that there is a purpose to the universe live in ways that contradict their very own ideas. For example, once one of my visitors argued that the universe is arbitrary. I said to him: "If what you are saying were true and you believed in it, you would not have visited me and you would not have discussed this with me. Your own strife shows your faith in a truth for which you are searching." The Qur'an contends that unlike most human behavior, which is learned by human beings after they come into the world, faith in God is something that a human being is born with, something that he or she is imprinted with, just as other creatures are imprinted with the behavior appropriate to their species. The searching and yearning that my visitor experienced is always present because the human body, by design, requires purpose. Genes in the human nervous system demand meaning. Thus, humans

come to life with a profound curiosity that challenges any nihilism and loss of purpose[31];' a human being is innately a creature in search of meaning and order in the universe, a creature who instinctively responds to the demand of monotheism.

Belief in God implies a rejection of the notion that the universe is arbitrary, even though it permits a wide and open range of views about the meaning of the universe that still give honor to God[32]:

> *Those who celebrate the praises of God, standing, sitting and lying down on their sides, and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth, (with the thought): `Our Lord! Not for naught have You created (all) this! Glory to You! Give us salvation &om the penalty of the Fire.' (Surah 3 Ali `Imran: 190191)*

Justice and the word of equity are not nihilistic notions, nor is compassion arbitrary. Nihilism lies in the attempt to conceal or the inability to see the demands of justice, piety and compassion throughout history. While people despair out of the long whimsical lives they lead and "many false prophets will rise, and will mislead many; and as lawlessness (inequity) spreads, the love of many will grow cold," (Matt 24:11-12) the longing and yearning for knowledge, from which love grows, does not die. It is true that human beings are willing to give away their lives and fortunes for the sake of self actualization, and the yearning for self actualization is a flame that never dies. Yet, it is possible for us to mistake the movement of the sun, and still we are capable of correcting such wrongs and of moving beyond them once and for all.

History imposes purpose and meaningfulness. Any understanding bereft of history is disconnected and arbitrary. History teaches us this. But history is a vision that includes the present, past and future. Any person capable of seeing this reality is in perpetual prayer and in touch with the sacred. S/he is "involved" with the universe, driven to pursue the best.

History, without weariness, is like a patient instructor and humanity is like a clever student who finally understands its lessons. At the end, humanity comes to the call of history and moves forward to economize and invest in resources. Humanity comes to learn about its capacities through history. Thus, it is perhaps possible to see why that . which brings the best out in a human being is never the result of coercion. Human beings have a longing for the meaning of their

31 "When your Lord drew forth from the children of Adam, from their loins-their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves, (saying): `Am I not your Lord?' They said: `We do testify' (This), lest you should say on the Day of Judgement: `Of this we were never mindful."' Surah 7 A1 A'raf: 172.

32 For instance, the Qur'an says: "Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, And the alternation of Night and Day . . . there are indeed signs for those of hearts (understanding)." Surah 2 A1 Baqarah: 164.

own lives and the world around them, and we must be skilled in investing in this longing, rather than bludgeoning it with coercion. History exemplifies God's investment in human understanding and His stand against the waste of coercion: "Soon will We show them our signs in the horizons, and in their own selves, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the truth . . . ." (Surah 41 Fussilat: 53)

The signs in our selves and in the horizons (or universe) reveal the truth, tempting human intelligence to perform its meaning-making role by reaching for the best outcome with the least effort and energy. The constant law of history has as its goal keeping that which is the largest benefit for the greatest number of people who live on earth, and not that which benefits some of them. This is a significant law; it is what distinguishes truth from evil in the Qur'an:

> *"Thus does God (by parables) show forth truth and falsehood. For the foam (scum) dries out (disappears) like forth cast out; while that which is for the benefit of humankind remains on the earth . . . ." (Surah 13 Al Ra'd: 17)*

This law is the decisive point of reference. It does not spare those who slack behind: it will abrogate them. That which is more beneficial to humankind will supersede that which is less beneficial, whether in technology or human understanding. "None of our revelations do we abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something either better or similar: do you not know that God has power over all things." (Surah 2 Al Baqarah: 106)

The Qur'an confirms this through a dialogue between Abraham and his people:

> *`Behold,' he said to this father and his people: `What worship you?' They said: `We worship idols, and we remain constantly in attendance on them.' He said: `Do they listen to you when you call (on them), Or do you good or harm?' They said: `Nay, but we found our fathers doing thus.' (Surah 26 A1 Shu'ara': 71-74)*

Abraham is demanding a good outcome, benefits that his people would reap from their pious belief and behavior. In fact we might consider Abraham the first pragmatist in the sense that he sought the public good and not private privilege. However, his nation did not share his view; they followed their fathers' examples. The Qur'an, in contrast, presents the prophetic standard as a regime of permissions and prohibitions which are based on whether the outcomes of human behavior are beneficial or harmful:

> *[F]or he [the Prophet] commands them what is agreeable and forbids them what is disagreeable (unseemly); he*

allows them as lawful what is good (and healthy) and prohibits them from what is vile; he releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them. (Surah 7 Al A'raf 157)

The Qur'an stresses and relies on this standard in deciding what is permissible and what is taboo[33].

The Qur'an presents the laws given for human benefit as the crux of the call of all the messengers. Monotheism, which is the essence of these laws, is the message of all prophets, all people of knowledge and all those who call for justice. The Qur'anic recitation of the prophetic message, "Worship God and eschew evil" demands that the people come to the word of equity. The cause of all prophets has thus shifted from the theological and metaphysical to the social and political, and the religious issue becomes the secular issue. This movement is an important one to which we must pay attention, so that we will not separate the sacred from the profane, the divine from the secular, the world from the hereafter.

The core of the relationship between law and religion, and the mission of all prophets, is in the solution of the problem of violence and subjugation. Throughout history we see that the main problem with the human condition is humanity's rejection of the call for equality, or in the Qur'anic language, the word of equity[34]. Those who reject the word of equity have assumed superiority over all humanity, exalting themselves as gods above others and assuming for themselves all the sacredness and transcendentalism of the divine[35]. In these examples, we see that the common message of all prophets was to bring people to worshipping God and taking them away from obeying wicked tyrannies (taghut) even while the subjugated ones accept this domination rather than throwing it off. The prophets demanded an end to this repeated rotation of roles between oppressors and oppressed because they understood that such a polarized relationship is based on violence and subjugation. It is easy to argue that the major conflict in human existence is between theological and humanistic visions, but in fact, the major problem human beings face is social.

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33 For example, the Qur'an mentions the reason behind forbidding wine by using the standard of weighing harms and benefits: "They ask thee concerning wine and gambling. Say: `In them is great sin, and some profit for people; but the sin is greater than the profit . . , "' Id at 219.

34 Surah 3 Ali `Imran: 64.

Christ described the difficulty of the path that leads to life: "[N]arrow is the gate and constricted the road that leads to life, and those who find them are few." Matt 7:14.

35 The Qur'an quotes Pharaoh's superiority and assumed divinity as we saw above in verses: 79 An-Nazi'at: 24; 28 Al-Qasas: 38; 26 Ash-Shu'araa: 290. Pharaoh even threatened those who believed in Moses.

(Pharaoh) said: `Believe you in him before I give you permission? Surely this must be your leader who has taught you magic! I will certainly cut off your hands and feet on opposite sides, and I will have crucified on trunks of palm trees: so shall you know for certain which of us can give the more severe and the more lasting punishment!' Surah 20 Ta Ha: 71.

And we see the same in the dialogue of Abraham with the pharaoh of his age. "Abraham said: `My Lord is He who gives life and death.' He said: `I give life and death . . ."' Surah 2 Al Baqarah: 258.

It is about oppression and justice, equality and privileges, an oppressor imposing his earthly divinity and slaves oppressed by their own ignorance, succumbing to power and accepting domination.

History, too, presses for a solution. So, if we can respond to the problem of violence and history together, we will give humanity a forcible push toward solving its greatest dilemma, the schizophrenic disease of all civilizations. The birth of healing and the end of the crises is near. Our challenge lies in how to turn the relationship between law and religion from being destructive and painful to being constructive and healing[36].

Intellectuals: The "Blind Guides"

It may be more accurate to say that the problem of subjugation does not lie in the oppressors or their demeaned slaves, but in their "teachers" or "people of knowledge." The problem does not lie in the politician; the problem lies in the intellectual, the salt of the earth, the maker of a culture with all its institutions. We should lay bare the reality that the politician is the instrument of the intellectual and not the other way around. This is such a profound shift in our intellectual paradigms that it is almost Copernican in the cosmos of ideas about power and society. Comprehension and teaching are the roles of the intellectual. And if intellectuals fail to understand and take responsibility for the duality of the world around them, we should, only blame ourselves. Prophet Muhammad (PBLTH) says, "One who encounters good should thank God. One who finds other than that should not blame but himself."[37]

We live in an era that witnesses an absence of true intellectuals. The problem we face is within the intellectuals and "people of knowledge." They are the resigned ones, those who do not trust what they possess. They revere the power of body rather than the true power of the intellect. They are so insecure about their knowledge that they are incapable of fertilizing people's minds with the understanding that will give them the vaccine against enslavement. Jesus referred to such guides: "Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You travel over sea and land to win one convert; and when you have succeeded you make him twice as fit for hell as you are yourselves." (Matt 23:15)

But, can we disturb the comfort of so-called intellectuals who exonerate themselves by placing the blame on politicians who serve interest groups?

The media, who could play a significant role in showing the problems of power, do not help either: they too absolve themselves of responsibility. Yet, when those who are responsible absolve themselves of it, they are absolving

36 Christ described the difficulty of the path that leads to life: "[N]arrow is the gate and constricted the road that leads to life, and those who find them are few." Matt 7:14.

37 From the abridgement of Sahih Muslim by Hafiz Mundhiri, edited by Mustafa A1 Bugha. From the Book of Zulm, section 1 under the number 1828. The Qur'an also says: "Whatever good happens to thee, is &om God; but whatever evil happens to thee, is from thy (own) self. And We have sent thee as a messenger to humankind and enough is God for a witness." Surah 4 A1 Nisa': 79.

themselves of being human. Ordinary people, who do not understand social dynamics, believe what they hear from intellectuals and feel despair. The followers of religions are also waiting for a savior, but we do not need more saviors. What we need is to revive the call of prophets.

It is unfortunate that our intellectuals have bewitched the world by manufacturing silence. Our intellectuals have nothing to say, because they are bereft of Abraham, Moses and Jesus. Religion has become a problematic subject in modern discourse. Only those who arc ignorant about the history of the evolution of knowledge can deify and sanctify falsehood. So, for example when God was declared dead in Western thought, it was an indication that the God of the philosophers' own perceptions had actually become invalid. But even "Man" died at the hands of nihilism. The reason for the perceived death of God and humanity (or Man) is that the reality of history is absent from our judgments. We can not rely on our perceptions to decide the laws of history, nor can we live on what is being fed to us by secularists or fake religious people. Their invalid perception or ignorance of the history of knowledge has misled people and robbed them of meaning, convincing people of absurdity of the world and humanity.

We are at the mercy of intellectuals who cannot distinguish Jesus from the Church or the Qur'an from the Muslims' interpretations. Jesus embodied Moses' message and the Torah but surpassed the followers of Moses[38]. Muhammad, too, embodied the message of Moses and the Torah, and Jesus and the Bible, but he surpassed their followers. And if there were to be a coming prophet, he or she would embody Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and their message but would surpass their followers and what they now stand for. Our modern intellectuals are incapable of being prophetic, of seeing the messages of these prophets. H.G. Wells points out intellectuals' problematic relationship to Christianity in the modern West, arguing that intellectuals, when dealing with the Bible, ensure that "the baby is thrown out with the bath water[39]." At least it seems that intellectuals fear that they will be dirtied with the bath water if they discuss the baby.

Intellectuals dread dealing in human experiences such as compassion. When Foucault discusses love and compassion, in Madness and Civilization, he passes briefly over the writings of poets like Artaud, Holderlin, and Nerval, "who somehow escaped the `gigantic moral imprisonment' of their age and glimpsed a fundamental experience of unreason which beckons us beyond the bounds of

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38 "The scribes and Pharisees occupy Moses' seat; so be careful to do whatever they tell you. But do not follow their practice; for they say one thing and do another. They make up heavy loads and pile them on the shoulders of others, but will not themselves lift a finger to ease the burden. Whatever they do is done for show . . . ." Matt 23:2-5.

39 H.G. Wells, The Outline of History (N.Y.: Macmillan Co. 1920) (Illustrated).

society[40]." Foucault wonders whether this Otherness is the opening for a "total contestation" of Western culture. Analyzing the search for a fundamental experience outside of history, Foucault "shows that this philosophic move is characteristic of the most developed forms of modern thought and yet is bound to fail[41]."

It is unfortunate that our intellectuals offer us such notions as "the end of history," or "clash of civilizations." They are the new custodians of the god of war. But as I have said, their nihilistic perceptions do not render the world meaningless. T'he Qur'an confirms this: "If the truth followed (had been in accord with) their desires, truly the heavens and the earth, and all beings therein would have been in confusion and corruption!" (Surah 23 A1 Mu'minun: 71)

The Bible also warns us that this search for a human experience outside of history is bound to fail. It is this notion that is seen as destined for failure by the builders of modernity which we find in the Bible:

> *Jesus said to them, `Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the main cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing, and it is wonderful [marvelous] in our eyes.'*
>
> *`Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and given to a nation that yields the proper fruits.' (Matt 21:42-43)*

We should know that we are not at the end of history. In fact, history teaches us that theories of Doomsday proliferated in civilizations that could not adapt to the movement of history. This is why the true role of prophets was not been fulfilled in their ancient eras.

Now is the time for the world to understand their message: the prophets did not come to compete in violent combat; they came to compete in goodness, in making a peaceful global society in which all humans are equal under the law. The path of monotheism, of peace, is the path toward accomplishing the will of God and the dream of prophets. The closest to the Lord are those who serve the people[42], "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matt 20:27-28)

Today's intellectuals should head religious revivalism in the world and perform tasks suitable to repentance, for the world has reached the dawn of the birth of a global democracy that acknowledges the equality of all people. All of

40 Charles C. Lemert & Gillan Garth, Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics 11 (Hubert L. Drefus & Paul Rabinow, eds., Chicago: U. of Chi. Press 1982).

41 41. Id.

42 As the Gospel of Matthew says, "[A]nd whosoever wants to be first [chiet] must be the slave of all." Matt 20:27.

us, intellectuals included, should respond to the call of the world to enter a new history of humanity.

Currently, however, this new era of history is governed by illusory ideas about freedom. The freedom of America, where I can put forth my ideas in journals such as this, is also the freedom of the Pharaoh, who claimed that his status quo was the path of guidance: "I but point out to you that which I see (myself); nor do I guide you but to the path of Right![43]" According to Pharaoh, Moses should be destroyed, for he might change the people's religion and worldview, thereby spreading corruption on earth. Pharaoh presents his path, a world without equality, as the path of reform and the ideal way. In a long Qur'anic dialogue Moses and Aaron confront the Pharaoh with the warning that God will penalize those who reject Him, even though both are afraid of him[44]:

> *`Verily it has been revealed to us that the penalty (awaits) those who reject and turn away.' Pharaoh responds to the message by saying, `Who then, O Moses, is the Lord of you two?' and Moses replies, `Our Lord is He who gave to each (created) thing its form (and nature), and further, gave (it) guidance.' He tells Pharaoh that the knowledge of all generations remains with the Lord. In return, Pharaoh accuses Moses of making magic[45]. `Therefore, concert your plan. And then assemble in (serried) ranks: He wins (all along) today who domineers.' (Surah 20 Ta Ha: 42-64)*

Moses is a prophet but he is also a type, a category of those who speak truth to power. He, like the other prophets, has come to terms with the evolution that took place when humanity entered the world of comprehension, the world of knowledge, the moment as God said, when "The man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil . . . ." (Gen 3:22)

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43 Surah 40 Ghafir: 29. Pharaoh also tells his (followers) about Moses and his call: "Said Pharaoh: Leave me to slay Moses; and let him call on his Lord! What I fear is lest he should change your religion, or lest he should cause mischief to appear in the land! "' Id. at 26.

44 God tells Moses and his brother after preparation and training:

Go, you and you brother. With my signs, and slacken not, either of you, in keeping Me in remembrance. Go, both of you, to Pharaoh, for he has indeed dominated (transgressed all bounds); But speak to him mildly; perchance he may remember or fear. They (Moses and Aaron) said: `Our Lord! We fear lest he hasten with insolence against us, or lest he tyrannizes.' He said: ` Fear not: for I am with you: I hear and see (everything). So go you both to him, and say, `Verily we are messengers sent by your Lord: send forth, therefore, the Children of Israel with us, and afflict them not: with a sign, indeed, have we come from your Lord! And peace to all who follow guidance!" Surah 20 Ta Ha: 4247.

45 (Pharaoh) said:

`What then is the condition of previous generations?' He replied: `The knowledge of that is with my Lord, duly recorded: my Lord never errs, nor forgets.' Then Pharaoh replies: He said: `Have you not come to drive us out of our land with your magic O Moses.' `But we can surely produce magic to match yours! So make a tryst between us and you, which we shall not fail to keep-neither we nor you-in a place where both shall have even chances.' Then Pharaoh consults with his chiefs about Moses: So, they disputed, one with another, over their affair, but they kept their talk secret. They said: `These two are certainly (expert) magicians: their object is to drive you out from your land with their magic, and to do away with most cherished institution.' Surah 20 Ta Ha: 51-52, 57-58, 60, 62-63.

The Role of Humanity and the Sin of Self Exaltation

The Qur'an approaches the relationship between humanity and the rest of existence in an interesting scene, which evokes imagination and historical contemplation:

> *`Behold,' your Lord said to the angels: `I will create a khalifah (vicegerent) on earth.' They said: `Will You place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? While we do celebrate Your praises (chant gratitude) and glorify Your holy (name)?' He said: `I know what you know not.' (Surah 2 Al Baqarah: 30)*

In the story, the word "Khalifah " (Caliph or vicegerent) stands for a creature, who will be trusted to perform tasks assigned by God. In a discussion about the human project, the angels object because this creature, they claim, will spread corruption and spill blood; for them, corruption is the absence of equality, the hierarchy of superiority and inferiority, and bloodshed is the result of this corrupt relationship. God responds that He knows what they do not know in terms of this creature's abilities and potential.

Another Qur'anic passage suggests that humanity has been given a place of trust, because of our ability through the nervous system to know good &om evil, to carry the covenant. "Agreement, covenant, trust, integrity, knowledge, loyalty" are the words used in the Qur'an to stress the uniqueness of the human condition and our special existential status in relation to other creatures: "We did indeed offer the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains but they declined to undertake it, being a&aid thereof but insan (the human being) undertook it. He was indeed oppressive and ignorant." (Surah 33 Al Ahzab: 72)

This is also the same meaning we find in the book of Genesis: "The Lord God . . . said, `The man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil . . . . '" (Gen 3:22)

The Heavens and other creatures are incapable of distinguishing good from evil, incapable of disobedience. Only humanity has the capacity for obedience and disobedience, for humanity alone has knowledge of harms and benefits. In the dialogue between God and the angels about humanity, the angels admit their ignorance when they are faced with the new creature's capacity:

> *And He taught Adam all the names; then he placed them before the angels, and said : `Tell Me the names of these if you are right.' They said: `Glory to You: of knowledge: we have none, save what You have taught us: in truth it is You who are perfect in knowledge and wisdom.' He said: `O Adam! Tell them their names.' When he had told them, God said: `Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven*

and earth, and I know what you reveal and what you conceal?' (Surah 2 A1 Baqara: 33)

It is as if God is saying that this creature's potential comes from its ability to name, to give symbolic designation to things in creation, an ability that makes humans worthy to become God's deputies on earth. Through this human ability to symbolize, God's prophecy will unfold, even though humanity itself does not see this divine futuristic vision. Our species is still realizing the expectations and predictions of the angels, instead of God's vision[46].

Indeed, Satan himself is unwilling to accept God's conferral of authority upon humans[47], tempting them with the prospect of their own power as gods:

Then did Satan make them slip from the (garden), and get them out of the state (of felicity) in which they had been. We said: `Get you down, all (you people), with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling place and your means of livelihood for a time.' (Id. at 36)

Then began Satan to whisper suggestions (insinuate) to them, in order to reveal to them their shame that was hidden from them (before): he said: "Your Lord only forbade you this tree, lest you should become angels or join those who are immortal[48]." (Surah 7 Al-A'raf 20)

However, when Adam and Eve fall for Satan's lure, God addresses them equally to signify their equal responsibility and status, and they confess the injustice they have committed: "They said: `Our Lord! We have been unjust to ourselves (wronged ourselves). If You forgive us not and bestow not upon us Your mercy, we shall certainly be lost. "' (Id. at 23)

It is perhaps this ability to admit the truth that made Adam worthy of vicegerency[49], unlike Satan, or (Iblis), who thought himself too important to recognize the trust given to Adam. Not only did Satan refuse to take

46 It is said: "And behold, We said to the angels: `Bow down to Adam:' and they bowed down: not so Iblis (Satan): he refused and was haughty; he was of infidels." Surah 2 AI Baqarah: 34.

47 "We said: `O Adam! Dwell you and your wife in the garden; and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and when) you will; but approach not this tree, or you be among the unjust (transgressors).'" Id. at 35.

48 The passage continues: "And he swore to them both, that he was their sincere adviser. So by deceit he brought about their fall: when they tasted of the tree, their shame became manifest to them, and they began to sew together the leaves of the garden over themselves. . . . And their Lord called unto them: "Did I not forbid you that tree, And tell you that Satan was an avowed enemy unto you?" Surah 7 Al-A'raf 21-22.

[49] Although the Qur'an states that Satan had a big role in tempting them to eat from the tree by arguing that it would give them immortality and eternal authority, Adam and Eve confessed that it was they who wronged themselves. Satan presented himself as a sincere counsel. But Adam and Eve did not mention Satan's temptation and misleading. Rather, they took the burden of responsibility without trying to place blame somewhere else. T'hey perhaps even felt that blaming Satan would condemn them twice whereas admitting the truth could redeem their wrong

responsibility for his own actions[50], but he took pride in his material origins: (God) said: "What prevented you from bowing down when I commanded you?" He said: "I am better than he: You did create me from fire, and him from clay." (Id. at 12)

Like Satan, the racial pride and reference to one's origins and refusal to take responsibility for disobedience leads to religious, ethnic and even civilizational conflicts. History teaches us that civilizations do not perish as martyrs, but as suicides from their internal diseases. Solutions come from the self, from discovering one's mistakes, not from blaming others. That is why the Qur'an suggests that God is not responsible for injustice, for injustice comes from the self and is worse than injustice inflicted by any other[51].

The Soviet Union perished through its own injustice and so will other societies, even those that consider themselves to be orthodox, to be beloved sons of God. The Qur'an condemns what some call orthodoxy as self perceived exalted status, and shows how judging other nations as less worthy is a common problem that afflicts us all: "And they say: `None shall enter Paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian.' Those are their (vain) desires. Say: `Produce your proof if you are truthful. '" (Surah 2 Al Baqarah: 112)

All religious and political communities reward themselves with a monopoly over paradise in their stories and tales. These are only mere human wishes, which many previous nations have expressed; but the law of the Lord in history is not based on some whimsical illusion or on favoritism for some at the expense of others. According to the Qur'an, the law of the Lord does not distinguish among humans. "Naywhoever submits his face (self) to God while compassionate (doer of good) has his reward with his Lord; on such shall be no fear, Nor shall they grieve." (Id. at 111)[52]

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[50] We hear:

Then We bade the angels bow down to Adam, and they bowed down; not so Iblis; He refused to be of those who bowed down. (God) said: `Get thee down from this: it is not for thee to be arrogant here: get out, for thou art of the meanest.' He said: `Give me respite till the day they are raised up.' (God) said: `Be thou amongst those who have respite.' He said: `Because Thou hast thrown me out of the way (misled me), lo! I will lie in wait for them on thy straight way.' Surah 7 A1 A'raf 12-16.

It is impottant to note that Satan had two reasons to excuse his disobedience. First, he used his material origin, arguing that he was created of a matter better than Adam's. Second, he used his worldview to explain his disobedience, arguing that God made him sin.

[51] For instance, there are passages that read: "Whatever good, happens to you, is &om God; but whatever evil happens to you is from your own self." Surah 4 Al-Nisaa: 79. "God was not unjust to them: nay, they were unjust to themselves." Surah 16 A1 Nahl: 33. So, any judgement about others is a judgement about one's self be it good or bad. Moreover, the Surah says: "Whoever works righteousness benefits his own self; whoever misbehaves, it is against his own self; nor is your Lord ever unjust (in the least) to his servants." Surah 41 Fussilat: 46.

[52] . The Qur'an also says:

Nor your desires, nor those of the People of the Book (Can prevail): whoever works evil, will be requited accordingly. Nor will he find, besides God, any protector or helper. Surah 4 A1 Nisa': 123.

(Both) the Jews and the Christians said: `We are the sons of God, and his beloved.' Say: `Why then does He punish you for your mistakes (sins). Nay, you are but humans of those He has created. . . .' Surah 5 A1 Ma'idah: 18.

VI. THE RETURN TO THE COVENANT OF THE PROPHETS

The history of the world shows that the angels' accusations that humans will spill blood on earth and spread corruption have been accurate so far. Is it possible for us to come out from under the angels' judgment to the light of the Lord's knowledge of us; can we accomplish this scientifically and methodologically?

How can we return to the covenant of the prophets, the covenant they pledged with God to enter the world of love and compassion, the world of knowledge and eternal life and bliss? Though, it seems that our species is still fulfilling the predictions of the angels, God saw something else in the capacities He bestowed upon humanity[53].

The shift to the nervous system makes this possible, for instead of the demand, "I have authority because I am stronger," human beings can say, "counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength." (Prov 8:14)[54] In this categorical change[55], this biological evolution, ability and authority became ours. Humanity will come out of this age of illusion just as it has come through the ages of enslavement and human sacrifice, decreasing comxption by abolishing slavery and decreasing bloodshed by ending the practice of human sacrifice.

It is easy to understand why it was difficult to recognize the relocation of authority from muscles, fangs and nails to human consciousness in the era of

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This passage implies the equality of all human beings: God does not have sons above the law, and no group of people have special privileges, not even the peoples of the Book:

The Jews say: `The Christians have naught (to stand) upon,' And the Christians say: `The Jews have naught (to stand) upon.' Yet they study the same Book. Like unto their word is what those say who know not; but God will judge between them in their quarrel on the Day of Judgement. Surah 2 Al Baqarah: 1 13.

This is the message of all prophets, as the Biblical story of John the Baptist shows: When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism he said to them: `Vipers' brood! Who warned to escape from the wrath that is to come? Prove your repentance by the fruit you bear; and do not imagine you can say, `We have Abraham for our father.' I tell you that God can make children for Abraham out of these stones. The axe lies ready at the roots of the trees; every tree that fails to produce good fruit is cut down and thrown on the fire. Matt 3:7-10.

We read these words elsewhere in the Bible as well:

Many, I tell you, will come from the east and west to sit with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob at the banquet in the kingdom of Heaven. But those who were born to the kingdom will be thrown out into the dark, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth. Man 8:11-12.

Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because my teaching is beyond your grasp. Your father is the devil and you choose to carry out your father's desires. John 8: 43-44.

53 "Have We not made for him a pair of eyes? And a tongue, and a pair of lips? And show him the two ways (paths)." Surah 90 A1 Balad: 8-10.

[54]. This verse is from the King James version.

[55] Initially, I began by noting that the evolution of the nervous system and the possibility of transmitting knowledge and experience through symbols created God's vicegerent on earth enables humanity to interfere in deciding its future, as the Book of Genesis tells us in the story about Adam's creation. He has eaten from the tree of knowledge. (He also wanted to eat &om the tree of life. Perhaps he will do that too and live forever.) This shift is signified in the Bible in many instances: "I am wisdom, I bestow shrewdness and show the way to knowledge and discretion." Prov 8: 12. "[Yjou will know the truth, and the truth will set you &ee." JoHn 8: 32.

Jesus. But to see this ignorance, this illusion still dominating the modern world is amazing. Its implications are so shocking that very few wake up from the shock. I have felt this despair and disconnection for over a third of a century. But the path that recognizes the shift of authority from muscles to the nervous system is narrow: For example, the problematic status of women in the world is still connected to this inability to understand the shift to the nervous system. And so are all power relations: between adults and children, men and women, superpowers and small powers, the owners of nuclear arms and those who lack them, the possessors of veto rights and the ones to whom they are forbidden.

Many other forms of corruption and bloodshed need to be urgently addressed because they have become burdensome and shameful; the institutions through which they are performed have become obsolete. As an example, it is scandalous that one-fifth of the world consumes four-fifths of the world's resources while the poorest fifth of the world population lives on less than one-fifth of tits resources. Moreover, millions die in tribal and hierarchical wars under the eyes and ears of humanity, this species that knows good and evil. This is corrupt management; and human beings turn a blind eye or even ~ nourish its continuation. They become accomplices in evil, undisturbed by the moral condemnation of their deeds for they do not understand morality as another form of economy. The violation of moral values leads to loss and sacrifice in the human economy; and we need to revise our notions of "economic" loss and gain to account for this reality.

Knowledge and skills are acquired through socialization in our species. This growth was implied in God's answer to the angels, who did not believe in the possibilities for humanity. However, we must understand that this is a sacred space for action when we look at it closely and realize what it means. It is like receiving a delicate baby, a carner of possibilities that are capable of growth. We must respond to humanity with care and attention equal to that we give a small infant. We must discover the trust that has been placed in us by God, who talks about the human soul as the ultimate evolution in the cosmos. After first presenting the wonders of the sun, moon, day, night and the heavens, the Qur'an continues: "By the soul (self) and the proportion and order given to it; He inspired it as to its wrong and its right. Truly he succeeds that purifies it. And he fails that vilifies it!" (Surah 91 A1 Shams: 7-10)

The perfected self sits at the top of creation. The human self has the potential to grow and go in either direction, to choose either path. The Qur'an talks about this amazing creation:

> *We have indeed created insan (human being) in the best of moulds, Then did We abase him [to be] the lowest of the low-. Except such as believe and do righteous deeds; for they shall have a reward unfailing. (Surah 95 A1 Tin: 4-6)*

We created insan (human being) from sequences (genealogies) of clay; Then We placed him as a drop in a place of rest, firmly fixed; Then We made the drop into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made a lump; then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then We evolved it into another being . . . so blessed be God, the best to create! (Surah 23 Al Mu'minun: 14)

This is the best and ultimate creation, upon whom the administration of the earth was bestowed, and to whom the improvement of human society was handed.

The human being with his/her unique nervous system is capable of transformation and change. Even evil is subject to reform. Thus, transforming humanity is a priority for all communities, who must focus on changing human content through learning the name, through teaching. The Qur'an puts it wonderfully: "Verily never will God change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves." (Surah 13 A1 Ra'd: 11)

T'he Qur'an expresses a profound orientation to the natural world as God's creation, as the source of knowledge after humanity has become capable of understanding: "Say: `Behold (observe) all that is in the heavens and on earth'; but neither signs nor warners profit those who believe not."' (Surah 10 Yunus: 101)

The Qur'an asks us to trace our history, its beginnings and end, causes and consequences by tracing the earth and observing what is in it. Looking into the heavens and earth is the source of knowledge. We read: "Say: `Travel through the earth and see how God did originate creation . . . "' (Surah 29 AI Ankabut: 20) We also find: "Let insan (human being) look from what he is created." (Surah 86 Al Tariq: 5)

Understanding how creation started will enable humanity to claim and utilize the world (taskhir); and to differentiate good from evil, harm from benefit. Understanding creation will propel humanity into creativity and inventiveness, divine attributes worthy of the vicegerency bestowed upon us:[56] "And the Lord God . . . said, `The man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil . . ."' (Gen 3:22)

With the gift of its mind, humanity has become a species altogether different from others, and has moved to a world outside the animal kingdom. In fact, the evolution of humanity into a thinking species enabled it to utilize other creatures in its service. For instance, after using their own muscles to labor, humans were

56 This the vicegerency we read about in: "Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: `I will create a vicegerent on earth . . . ."' Surah 2 A1 Baqarah: 30.

then able to discern how to use the muscles of other species for energy, a pattern which continued for ten thousand years. Then, using the gift of the nervous system, humanity harnessed fire and steam and captured electricity for heat and light. Now we even know the secrets of the sun and stars' energy; yet, as the Qur'an foretold, the nervous system in a human being has more potential than all the energies of the suns and stars[57]. The angels may be excused for their accusation, for all of these achievements were made on a long path of suffering and struggle. But God knew how this species would move beyond the use of its muscles in dealing with itself and its environment to using its nervous system.

The dialogue between God and the angels that captures God's vision of humanity's future is retold in part of Adam's tale in the Qur'an, the story of Adam's sons:

> *Behold! They each presented an offering (to God); it was accepted from one, but not from the other. Said the latter: `Be sure I will kill you.' `Surely,' said the former, `God does accept from those who are righteous.' `If you do stretch your hand to kill me, I (surely) will not stretch my hand to kill you: for I fear God, the cherisher of the worlds (of all).' `I intend to let you draw on yourself my sin as well as yours, for you will be among the companions of the Fire, and that is the reward of those unjust.' The (selfsh) self of the other led him to the murder of his brother: he murdered him, and then became (himself) one of the losers. Then God sent a raven who scratched the ground to show him how to hide the shame of this brother. `Woe is me!' said he; `Was I not even able to be as this crow, to hide the shame of my brother?' Then he became [regretful] full of regrets. (Surah 5 A1 Ma'idah: 30-34)*

Whether this is a historical event or a symbolic story, what I find important in the story is the way it signifies the elevation of humanity to the level of mind, to understanding and utilization (taskhir) over the muscle. The story signifies a shift in authority, once based on violence and coercion, to a new authority based on comprehension. It signifies a voluntary choice between good and evil, and humankind's evolution from the law of the jungle to the law of understanding.

Here, we see a shift toward the law of dialogue, the emergence of accountability and moral responsibility. We see the refusal to return to the previous law of violence, a glimpse of a world that humanity could surpass and a trust that humanity could abide by the new law. In the Qur'an, we are witnesses to the dialogue over the murdered son of Adam. Cain, who failed,

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[57] *See, for example, the passage: "And He has utilized (subjected) to you, as from Him all that is in the heavens and on earth: behold, in that are signs indeed for those who retlect." Surah 45 A1 Jathiyah: 13.*

rest~rted to killing instead of reviewing his mistakes. He told his brother, whose offering was accepted, "I will kill you." While the book of Genesis does not describe Abel's answer, the Qur'an does. Abel clearly and emphatically answers his brother's threat: "I (surely) will not stretch my hand to kill you: for I fear God . . . ." (Id.) There is no hesitation or doubt in Abel's position. He is determined and willing to face the consequences. His newly conferred responsibility is laid bare, and he uses well his newly acquired authority. Abel's response is not heretical any more than was Galileo's, though the world and the church came to believe him only after four hundred years had passed. It rather marked the evolved attitude of humanity's new life.

We should stop a moment to witness the beginning of a new era that Abel founded, with his new evolutionary consciousness. Whether the story is factual or symbolic, four million years after humans stood erect, this moment is recognized in history through Socrates. His story is a similar case: one who accepted death and refused to evade or stop dialogue. We salute both Abel and Socrates for trusting humanity's evolution and refusing to regress. In doing so, they rejected return to the law of physical power. By their response to violence, they became an example and role model for the intellectual.

The Qur'an recites the determination of all the prophets to share the attitude of Adam's son, to withstand harm and exercise patience in the face of the persecution inflicted upon them by their own people. They refuse to respond with harm against the harm inflicted upon them. They continue in their call and dialogue and endure the consequences. They are determined not to regress back to the way of violence, because for them, this constitutes blasphemy. As with Abel, God asks Prophet Muhammad (PBITH) to tell the world about Noah, who said to his people,

> *O my people, if it be hard on you that I should stay (with you) and remind you of God's signs, then to God I commend my trust. Get you then an agreement about your plan and among your partners, so your plan be not to you dark and dubious. Then pass your sentence on me and give me no respite. (Surah 10 Yunus: 71)*

Noah, here too, is addressing the understanding of humanity and is determined to withstand harm in this dialogue. He insists on performing his call no matter what his people do to him. He wants to address their minds with knowledge and not their bodies with physical harm. He suffers their harm while refraining from harming them back. The Qur'an tells a similar story of Shu'aib, who stands by his principles when the people of his town would drive him out[58].

[58] *"The leaders, the arrogant party among his people, said: `O Shu'ayb! We shall certainly drive you out of our city-and those who believe with you; or else you shall have to returo to our sect (religion).' He said: `What! Even though we do detest it."' Surah 7 Al-A'raf: 88.*

In the dialogue, we read the response of Shu'aib and his followers, who are facing exile from their people:

> *`We would have concocted a lie against God if we returned to your sect (religion) after God has rescued us therefrom; nor could we by any manner of means return to it . . . .' (Surah 7 Al A'raf: 89) Thus, all of the prophets say: `We would have concocted a lie against God if we returned to your sect (religion or path) . . . ' (Id.)*[59]
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> *And the Unbelievers said to their messengers: `Be sure we shall drive you out of our land, or you shall return to our sect (religion) . . . .' (Surah 14 Ibrahim: 13) `No reason have we why we should not put our trust in God. Indeed He has guided us to our paths. We shall certainly bear with patience the harm you may cause us. For those who put their trust should put their trust in God.' (Id. at 12)*

In the unity of the prophets' determination not to enter the world of physical conflict even in persecution, we see a pacifist attitude, the decision to decline even self defense, the ability to stay patient while they are being harmed, the insistence on intellectual conflict. They insist on freedom of opinion while bearing all possible consequences. In this determination to be pacifist, freedom of opinion and belief is established from their side. Such freedom is secured by keeping the field of conflict clean and disinfected like a surgical room. This is intellectual integrity, what Abel and Socrates and the prophets practiced; by practicing one's opinion and bearing the consequences without engaging in violence, intellectual freedom is founded.

Prophetic Disobedience

The Prophets taught their followers how to disobey. It is ironic that disobedience is found in pacifism, obedience in violence; it is ironic that most world armies train and manufacture soldiers to obey and implement orders with no objections. However, the principle of obedience to violence has its costs. The Torah and the Qur'an mention that Adam's son, the killer, was hit with loss and eaten with regret. This is the unconscious disease that inflicts soldiers who enter criminal wars: just as pollution rises when we abuse the environment, so would

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[59] *The passage continues. This is reiterated again in the Qur'an:*

Has not the story reached you, of those who (went) before you?-of the People of Noah, and `Ad, and Thamud-And of those who (came) after them. None knows them but God. To them came messengers with clear signs; but they put their hands up to their mouths, and said: `We do deny (reject) on which you have been sent, and we are really in suspicious doubt as to that to which you invite us.' Their messengers said: `Is there a doubt about God, the creator of the heavens and the earth' . . . . `No reason have we why we should not put our trust on God. Indeed He has guided us to our paths. We shall certainly bear with patience the harm you may cause us. For those who put their trust should put their trust on God.' Surah 14 Ibrahim: 9-12.

these consequences appear when we abuse our souls in violence. The medical disorders of the soldiers returning &om the Gulf war and the Vietnam war are signs of this troubled conscience. The resignation of the French Defense Minister during the Gulf war and the refusal of some Russian generals to prosecute the war against the Chechens are others. Even though there is extensive research about the physical and psychological disorders caused by war, we do not pay enough attention to the mental costs of maintaining institutions that have become obsolete. The nervous system is a delicate realm and any mistaken use will manifest itself. We tax this system when we engage people in obsolete practices such as war, which has lost its function and viability.

The world wants a soldier to be like a rifle devoid of choice and subject to orders without a right to object. Soldiers are told "if you go to war, you might not get killed but if you do not go you will definitely die." Pharaoh told the same to those who rebelled against him, left his service and rejected his path. He threatened: "Be sure I will cut off your hands and feet on opposite sides, and I will have you crucified on trunks of palm trees." (Surah 20 Ta Ha:71) But his subjects decided to stand as Adam's son stood and confronted his threats with: "Never shall we regard you as more than the clear signs that have come to us or than Him who created us! So decree whatever you desire to decree: for you can only decree the life of this world." (Id. at 72)

Human beings have deeper yearnings than that for violence. They have needs which the prophets grasped and to which they addressed themselves. The Prophets directed their call to humanity, saying: "you have one divine Master whom you should obey." Should any human ask you to return to the law of muscles you must decline without hesitation. We have been told: "No one can serve two masters." (Matt 6:24) "Serve God, and eschew tyranny." (Surah 16 A1 Nahl: 36) The Prophets realized the blessing of knowing good and evil: one who truly understands the difference between good and evil becomes incapable of doing evil or responding to the call of evil[60]. This is a significant point in the teaching of the Prophets. Their first step was to teach people to withdraw from evil and to continue on the path of good.

A soldier who knows the difference between good and evil is useless in the armies of the world. Who would buy arms that are capable of disobeying orders? Who would buy a sword that distinguishes good from evil? This is what the Prophets wanted to manufacture, not a rifle made of flesh and bone.

The prophets wanted to found and establish a new way, the way of Adam's son, the one whose position can be summarized as follows: "I know good and evil and have left the law of the jungle. You could kill me but you can not turn

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[60] *This is also what is expressed in the Bible in: "The man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil." Gen 3:22.*

me into a killer." It is as if Abel is saying to his brother: "Yes you can kill me. I will die anyway even if you did not kill me. But I will not make my death validate killing. I will deny you the benefit of killing. I will do so by declining to enter the battle of bodies with you, because if I defend myself you will believe in the effectiveness of killing. I will abrogate and cancel the benefit of killing and make it vile even in your eyes." And Abel succeeded when "Cain said to the Lord, `My punishment is heavier than I can bear." (Gen 4:13)[61] "The Lord said, `What have you done? Your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground. (Id. at 10) In the Qur'an, Cain becomes full of remorse and regret. For while soldiers conceive of success in combat as heroic and even that assassinating a person who is armed and protected as skillful, the killing of those who do not defend themselves is seen as a grisly murder. Indeed, to resist passively is, ironically, economical, since not many can be killed by such a method unlike battles, which end up destroying many lives, both the defeated and the victorious. By declining to defend ourselves, like Adam's son, the Prophets and Socrates, we render killing criminal and remove awe from it.

The world still lives with our inability to adapt to the evolution of the human nervous system. Respecting human consciousness reached a high plateau in the calls of Jesus and Muhammad, to the point of calling for the love of one's enemies and responding with compassion to those who persecute us[62]. "If you love only those who love you, what reward can you expect? Even the tax-collectors do as much as that." (Matt 5:46) The Qur'an moves a step further; it no longer orders Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) companions to love their enernies but it states that they already love them[63]. We see in these two verses the possibility of loving one's enemies. We must approach this call to loving one's enemies on a level that removes it from the realm of insanity and impossibility as we have always conceived of it throughout history.

We should be able to disconnect the body from ideas, for the body is not born with evil. Rather, we fill the mind with evil, taking the wrongful of our two paths: "By the soul (self) and the proportion and order given to it; He inspired it as to its wrong and its right. Truly he succeeds that purifies it. And he fails that vilifies it!" (Surah 91 Al Shams: 7-10)

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[61] In the preceding passage, God calls Cain to account. See what the Lord God said, in the Old Testament, to Adam's son, the killer: "The LORD asked Cain, `Where is your brother Abel?' 'I do not know,' Cain answered. `Am I my brother's keeper?"' Gen 4:9.

[62] See the verses. Jesus says:

"You have heard that they were told, `An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.' But what I tell you is this: Do not resist those who wrong you. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn and offer him the other also. You have heard that they were told, `Love your neighbour and hate your enemy."' Matt. 5:44(King James Version). "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; only so can you be children of your heavenly Father, who causes the sun to rise on good and bad alike, and sends the rain on the innocent and the wicked [on the just and on the unjust.]" Matt 5:38-45.

[63] "Ah! You are those who love them, but they love you not-though you believe in the whole of the Book . . ." Surah 3 Ali `Iznran: 119.

Intellectual Healing

In trying to heal the disease of the soul, the choice for violence, we might consider how we respond to those who have physical diseases. Do we not love the sick person even while we hate the disease and strive with all our effort to combat it? What would we think if we saw a doctor who believed in healing sick persons by killing them instead of eradicating the disease? Who would ever use the services of such a doctor? Yet, is not a person with sick ideas a sick person; and is it not possible to love this person while hating his or her ideas? A sick person is normally in dire need for love and compassion. A person sick with the diseases of ignorance and hatred is also in dire need for love and knowledge, because knowledge is love and love is knowledge.

Faith in God, His prophets and books entails this: we must learn to create love, to turn hatred into love. This is the ultimate investment of human beings. "Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (evil) with what is better (with goodness): then will the person, with whom there is hatred between you and that person, become like a friend and intimate!" (Surah 41 Fussilat: 34) These are not mere wishes or dreams; neither are they utopian thoughts. They were certainties for prophets and we will come to discover them. It will be possible to capture thetri through other fornls of knowing like science. I want to call for the possibility of such a discovery just as John the Baptist did, crying in the wilderness for repentance[64]. "It was of him that the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, `A voice cries in the wilderness. Prepare the way for the Lord; Clear a straight path for him."' (Matt 3:3)

I want to cry, as John the Baptist did, that the person who caused the explosion in Oklahoma city, the person who gassed the subways of Tokyo, the person who killed Saddat and the person who killed Rabin, that all those who made decisions to go to war in the last half of this century are screaming about their ignorance of history. All those killed as a result of these battles are human offerings, justified only by the thought that our ancient ancestors were cannibals.

Ultimately, our scientists will be able to articulate the reality of this horror methodologically and will become competent in convincing us of this reality. Even now, experts in various fields show us that the truth can make a significant difference, but we must cooperate in clarifying such matters. And we must never get weary, never give up. Jesus taught us perseverance in forgiving those who wrong us beyond patience[65]. "Jesus replied, `I do not say seven times but seventy times seven." (Matt 18: 22)

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[64] *"In the course of time John the Baptist appeared in the Judaean wilderness, proclaiming this message: `Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is upon you! "' Matt 3: I-2.*

[65] *"'Then Peter came to him and asked, `Lord, how often am I to forgive my brother if he goes on wronging me? As many as seven times?' Jesus replied, `I do not say seven times but seventy times seven."' Ma~t 18:21.*

VII. THE PUR.POSE OF LAW AND THE PURPOSE OF RELIGION

We cannot understand the role of either law or religion unless we understand human nature. We must believe that the human being is capable of knowing good and evil, benefit and harm, because our bodies by nature are vulnerable to differences in the environment (e.g., can live only within limited temperatures), a fact that defies a relativist attitude toward good and evil. The Qur'an, for example, stresses such distinctions:

> *The blind and the seeing are not alike,*
>
> *Nor are the depths of darkness and the light;*
>
> *Nor are the (chilly) shade and the (genial) heat of the sun:*
>
> *Nor are alike those that are living and those that are dead . . . (Surah 35 Fatir: 19-23)*

We also read in Surah: "Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (evil) with what is better (with goodness) . . . ." (Surah 41 Fussilat: 34)

A human being is a vessel into which we put culture, religion, law and good and evil. People are born not knowing anything; they are of our own making, as the Qur'an says: "It is He who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when you knew nothing; and He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affection: that you may give thanks." (Surah 16 Al Nahl: 78) Unless we understand this, we will not be able to leave corruption and bloodshed. Without this, we will not be able to bear responsibility as Adam did and we will stay on the path of Satan. We will have concocted a lie against God if we regress back.

Religion is about salvation in the here-and-now and in the hereafter. Salvation is to accept good and reject evil, to refuse to become an instrument for evil, to cooperate for good and righteousness. "Help you one another in righteousness (compassion) and piety, but help you not one another in sin and rancour . . ." (Surah 5 Al Ma'idah: 3)

"`In very truth, I tell you', said Jesus, `that everyone who commits sin is a slave (of sin).'" (John 8:34) Both the Bible and Qur'an show us ways of dealing with evil that go beyond the simple dichotomies of ordering people to stay away from evil or to destroy evil. At the risk of simplifying the issue, it is important to clarify how we still fail in approaching the mental realm. Killing the evil one is like breaking the glass instead of washing it. Since we do not accept doctors who kill their patients, it is hard to understand why we accept it when intellectuals, or those who claim to be sons of God, continually glorify the killing of the ignorant instead of teaching and guiding them[66].

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[66] *Jesus describes the "intellectuals" of his age in many ways:*

When we understand this, we reach serenity and bliss, or what Indian philosophy may describe as Nirvana, a state, which cannot be found by those who condemn others and absolve themselves. In the Qur'anic language one reaches what is termed the "pure heart" (al-qalb assalim) or wholeness when the heart becomes devoid of hatred. As the Qur'an says, "The Day will come whereon neither wealth nor children will avail, But only he (will be saved) that brings to God a sound heart." (Surah 26 Al-Shu'ara: 88-89)

In other words, violence comes from false knowledge, and peace in the heart requires true knowledge. As the Bible says, "And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32) And the Qur'an remarks, "Those who believe, and whose hearts find serenity in the remembrance of God: for without doubt in the remembrance of God do hearts find serenity." (Surah 13 Ra'd: 28) When serenity comes through knowledge, it is even manifested on the tongue, for language becomes devoid of abuse. The hand also stops harming, just as Adam's son refused to stretch his hand and harm his brother. Our serenity signals a commitment to reaching others through understanding and comprehension, even if the commitment is one-sided: "[He] committed them to the command of self restraint, and well were they entitled to it and worthy of it. And God has full knowledge of all things." (Surah 48 Al Fath: 26)

Just as religion is about this serenity, law is the system by which taboos and duties are set. Law is inherently needed in any collectivity, and it emerges automatically when people meet. In the first days, if a person entered a cave and it was empty, s/he could sit anywhere sThe liked. But if another person was there, the already occupied place became forbidden to the new arnval. Thus, taboo, and the notion of right and duty, emerge even in simple situations. When children play, they set rules by which both sides must abide. Law by its nature requires the commitment of all sides in order to provide protection when violation occurs. When law is violated and some want to sit in the place , of others, social consciousness must be used to intervene and prevent such a breakdown. Law by its nature presupposes a deparlure from violence. Thus, those who refuse to leave violence cannot enter the world of law.

Entering the world of law is voluntary and those who enter this world are subject to it equally. The dilemma of law does lies in its severity or leniency, for this imbalance can be modified with the consensus of the community or involved parties. The problem lies in the fact that people rebel against the law and thereby break the covenant and that the lawmakers apply the law to punish

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They make up heavy loads and pile them on the shoulders of others, but will not themselves lift a finger to ease the burden. Whatever they do is done for show . . ; they love to have the place of honour at feasts and the chief seats in the synagogues, to be greeted respectfully in the street, and to be addressed as "rabbi" . . . . `Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of Heaven in people's faces; you do not enter yourselves, and when others try to enter you stop them. Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You travel over sea and land to win one convert; and when you have succeeded you make him twice as fit for hell as you are yourselves.' Man 23:2-15.

some while letting others get away. This is the injustice that breaks down societies.

> *Nor was thy Lord the one to destroy villages (a population) until he had sent to its centre a messenger, rehearsing to them our signs: nor are We going to destroy villages (a population) except when its members are unjust. (Surah 28 A1 Qasas: 59)*

Law provides protection for those who come under its authority. They relinquish their sovereign right to protect themselves and surrender it to law. Living in a society entails protecting its members and arbitrating among them with justice.

But when society relinquishes this protection to the individual, it regresses to the law of the jungle. There can never be law where people rely on their own individual power instead of resorting to society to resolve their conflicts. Similarly, there can never be democracy where individuals resort to their personal powers or where they have the belief that their own power is sufficient to protect them. Law is about stopping violence to solve conflicts peacefully, so where physical power rules, law disappears. And where knowledge and understanding rule, law occurs. The dividing line between lawlessness and law depends on whether authority resides in the realm of the intellect or in the realm of biceps[67]. "Hast thou not turned thy vision to thy Lord? How He doth prolong the shadow! If He willed, He could make it stationary! Then, We make the sun its evidence." (Surah 25 A1 Furqan: 45) In a lawful society, authority is not contingent on the body. The authoritative point of reference decides the nature of a given society; it places the society either within or without the boundaries of legitimacy and peace.

Law and violence negate each other. There is no law where there is violence and there is no violence where there is law. Of course, this is a complex idea: the mechanisms of law and violence escape us the way the movement of two mobile bodies confuses us. But as I have argued, just as our misconceptions of the universe will not change any of its laws or movements, so the natural relationship between law and violence will not change just because we think violence is a vital part of our lives.

Law and religion should not be founded on human whims and illusions. Nor should they be based on mere mental perceptions of the world; rather, our intellectuals should be creating a methodology using historical knowledge for weighing our perceptions, with harm and benefit to the creation as its point of

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67 The Qur'an brings examples on how our own mental perceptions take precedence over reality. The Qur'an discusses how humans could be more lost than animals because they are not programmed with instincts the way animals are. Since humans have choice and the knowledge of good and evil, their deviation is worse than animalistic behavior, which is regulated and programmed by instinct. The Qur'an uses the sun as an example of how our own perceptions could be misleading.

reference. Historical knowledge permits us to sift through the harrn and benefit of countless human actions; "you will recognize them by their fruit[68]." With history, we know more about good and evil, a knowledge that will gradually deepen and consolidate.

The Call of Democracy

Our legal and religious cultures were not built on strong foundations. Historically speaking, we must credit the Christian ethos for facilitating the appearance of the modern democratic nation-state. The notion of law as an alternative in resolving conflict has appeared, at least in limited form, within national democracies. It represents at least a small departure from ancient polarities of power, although it has not yet established itself beyond such zones. For instance, a comparison between the civilization of modern America and the ancient Egyptian civilization will show us how authority in the United States, the country of law and freedom, still depends on power, how trust still resides in muscle. The world in which we live is still incapable of putting its trust in ideas.

The United Nations is a similar manifestation of our failure. Despite the appearance of democracy within the nation state, international relations are still based on force. The constitution of the United Nations manifests this limitation in comparison to the constitution of the United States[69]. The ultimate international political institution, yet the U.N. is based on negating both law and religion; it is based on power. The problems with the United Nations and the division between East and West are manifestations of disease that indicates the need for a new paradigm. The Charter of the United Nations suffers from a failure to adapt to a new world, for its old paradigms about force and violence no longer explain the events of this century. We therefore become victims of our misinterpretation of the factors that led to the rise of Japan, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the variables behind the European Unity, and the rapid development of many parts of South Asia. All these states were subject to a world dependent upon the realm of the intellect, not muscle. What brings about the rise or fall of a nation is no longer based on its military prowess. As such, the United States' belief that its force gives it control over the world is a form of self deception. Yet, it wants to maintain such a deception, about which it is not even embarrassed, as the children of Israel were not embarrassed to worship a lifeless golden calf.[70]

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[68] *"[T]he foam (scum) dries out like forth cast out; while that which benefits humankind remains on the earth." Surah 13 A1 Ra'd: 17. And in the Bible, we read: "You will recognize them by their fruit. Can grapes be picked from briars, or figs &om thistles? A good tree always yields sound fruit, and a poor [corrupt] tree bad [evil] fiuit." Matt 7:16-17.*

[69] *The rule of law that has such a high place in the United States is only an internal phenomenon. It does not represent the commitment of the U.S. in the United Nations charter or in its actions throughout the world.*

[70] *As the text says:*

Then he brought out (of the fire) before them (the people) a calf statue: it seemed to low: so they said: `This is your god, and the god of Moses . . . : (Moses) said: `What then is thy case O Samiri.' He replied: `I saw

(Moses) said: `Get you gone!' But your (punishment) in this life will be that you will say, `Touch me not'; and moreover you have a promise that will not fail: `now look at your god, of whom you have become a devoted worshiper: We will certainly melt it in a blazing fire and scatter it broadcast in the sea!' (St~rah 20 Ta Ha: 95-97)

The arms race is another example of the failure to expand law on an international level. All states are p]aying a game that has been rendered obsolete. They do so by either suppressing information or exploiting ignorance when the bigger states sell outdated arms or small artillery to weaker satellite states. Although force has lost its objective effectiveness, it still performs as if it were magic.

The United Nations is still run like any backward country, ruled by despots, where a constitution has no value, where parliament is impotent. In fact, the United Nations is worse since its constitution does not even state theoretical equality. Rather, it institutionalizes inequality through the right of veto. The United Nation is illegitimate despite all the pervasive discourse of international legitimacy surrounding it. Its illegitimacy stems from its lack of equality, perhaps due to nations' continuing mistrust of what equality could bring. It seems global conditions have not yet reached a point where people feel the urge to enter into a new phase, and it is human nature not to enter a new phase until one has to. Intellectuals have the responsibility to raise people's consciousness, to turn the United Nations into a democratic institution, one that is based on the word of equity.[71]

The problems of our age are the result of our failure to adapt to a world where change is taking on an exhilarating speed in the techniques and instruments of knowledge. Yet, the quick external changes have surpassed our old paradigms, leaving them invalid and outdated. An example is the veto right, a scandal that hovers over the heads of our silent intellectuals, the fiuit of the intellectuals' harvest whether they like to admit it or not. So corrupt is our soil that a "disabled" institution has bloomed, the fruit of the twentieth century. Jesus told us to know good from evil from the fruits of such institutions: "Can grapes be picked &om briars, or figs from thistles? A good tree always yields sound fruit, and a poor [corrupt] tree bad [evil] fruit." (Matt 7:16-17) From the fiuit we know the weakness of the' international tree: we have created an institution that complicates problems instead of resolving them. The veto right is the religion and law of Pharaoh[72]. Pharaoh said: "If you do put forward any god other than

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what they saw not so I took a handful (of dust) from the footprint of the messenger, and threw it (into the calf): thus did my self suggest to me.' Surah 20 Ta Ha: 88.

[71] *As Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and wise, and revealing them to the simple [unto babes]." Matt 11:25.*

[72] *He said: "I am your Lord, Most High." Surah 79 A1 Nazi'at: 24. He adds: "If you tum to another God, I shall surely imprison you." Surah 26 Al-Shu'ara': 29.*

me, I will certainly make you of the imprisoned." (Surah 26 A1 Shu'ara: 29) This is a negation of the word of equity (kalimat assawa'). The veto right is the negation of the word of justice and law, the negation of human rights and democracy. It is the ultimate corruption in our fiustrated.disabled world.

The breeze of democracy, as evidenced in the rise of the European Union[73], is reminiscent of the call of prophets. Democracy has reached a point where it now forbids the creation of political authority via violence. What the Prophets taught about human equality has entered our world as a science and as a consciousness. A slow and painful process, nevertheless, the birth of democracy, no matter how small and limited, represents the birth of a new era in the world. That birth is the actualization and embodiment of the call of prophets, the expansion of the notion of law. However, the key difference between modern democracy and the call of the Prophets is that the Prophets forbade the path that modern democracy has taken, legitimating the founding of a society with the blood of coercion. The prophetic way viewed even violence used against despots and oppressors as illegitimate, and denounced the glorification of rebellion. The Prophets insisted on spreading the notion of monotheism by means of moral persuasion without any use of force. That is, they insisted on creating legitimacy with legitimacy, while we still subscribe to creating legitimacy with illegitimacy. This contradiction pollutes our political thinking and immerses us in confusion and self contradiction of our speech and actions.

The call of Jesus was not to change rulers; it was to change society. This fact confuses some people who want to believe that Jesus removed monotheism from politics when he said to leave for Caesar what belongs to Caesar. Reforming politics according to monotheism is a different path than using violence to disobey tyrants. The path of prophets toward inducing social and political change is financially economical and it saves human lives. Those who separate politics from religion have separated religion, justice and equality in their worship of coercion. But even those who mix politics and religion are in no mood to heed the prophetic method of social change: they too, emulate the rest of the world and accept the establishment of political authority with violence. The world is in an awkward position in relation to those crises

which take violence as their role models, such as the Algerian crisis that has taken the French Revolution as its role model. The world condones the use of violence to return a lost right of self determination, a precept that is at the heart

[73] *The European Union is perhaps the fitst historical indication of the possibility for the expansion of democracy and, in essence, the notion of law. For the first time in history, a few nation states are uniting on the basis of equality under the law. This union, in addition, is based on popular consent rather than on the will of some despotic emperor. The European unity represents a large society governed by equity under law, the lack of which explains why Europe never united at the hands of Bonaparte or Hitler. The absence of the exclusive veto right in the European Uruon confirms its democratic nature. Consequently, the European Union in principle has the potential of developing into a model of global unity, unlike the United Nations in its present form.*

of international law. Thus, ironically, some can claim that those who do not support the violent Algerian resurgence are in essence betraying their own ideals and principles when they are not supporting the fight for democracy.

But this argument does not understand a basic reality: the international crisis stems from reliance on violence and power, from reliance on the realm of the muscle rather than the realm of the intellect.

The crux of the assertion that "there is no coercion in religion" is that we have to separate the realm of the intellect from the realm of the muscle. We have to create an epistemological discontinuity between intellect and coercion and its instruments. This is accomplished through freedom of belief, through moral and intellectual maturity (rushd), which is distinct from wickedness (ghay), as truth is distinct from evil, and benefit from harm. Whoever rejects wickedness (ghay, which is coercive), refuses to allow coercion in religion, and believes in God (who forbids coercion in religion), has attained the most secure of all handholds.

If alchemy was about transforming rocks to gold, prophets were able to turn a human being into a rock. That is why Jesus said, "And whoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." (Matt 21:44)[74] And that is why he also said to one of his disciples when he was being taken away: "Put up your sword (again into its place). All who take the sword die by the sword." (Matt 26:52)

When we look at history, we find the possibility of resisting tyranny without violence. For instance, the early followers of Jesus resisted the state while they were committed to the path of nonviolence. They denied themselves the possibility of changing people's ideas through the use of force by killing them if they would not change. They kept their mission, not only in Palestine, but reached the heart of Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire to which Palestine belonged. The prophetic idea continued on the path of rejecting violence and the acceptance of persecution until society and people were transformed. In fact, the Emperor himself converted in the end. This struggle was not bloody, unlike the French Revolution, the Bolshevik Revolution and many other revolutions in the world. Rome converted to Christianity after four hundred years of peaceful, ethical, methodical difficult struggle, in which victims were only on one side. What a creative transformation, even if we still live in a world that does not comprehend this event consciously through social laws or as a political technique.

What happened within Christianity in four hundred years, happened within Islam in less than fourteen years when the Prophet called people to walk the same path as the followers of Jesus. Both religions accomplished what they did by departing from worshipping tyranny (taghut) and beginning to worship God.

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[74] *This verse is from the King James version as the verse number 44 in Matthew 21 is missing &om the Revised English Bible.*

They changed a civilization not by destroying a tyrant, but by refusing to obey his evil demands and calling him to the good (khayr). Similarly, Muslims did not enter Madinah as the result of a bloody war or revo]ution. Rather, , they did so through a persuasive transforming social movement without the use of violence or the killing of any person from the former society, which disintegrated on its own. In fact, only two Muslims were killed in Makkah during the persecution and torlure of new converts, for the new Muslims were not allowed to use self defense against them.

Those who believe in the legitimacy of founding a society with violence do not realize that they sanctify violence and reinstate the law of the jungle. Such a society becomes lawless since the peop]e's trust is placed in power and aggression over intellect. When we allow ourselves to found a society by such means, we automatically allow others to use such means against us when the time comes, thus entering a deformed vicious circle that deifies tyranny and worshiping power.

By refraining from the use of violent means to change society, and by prohibiting violence absolutely to one's self, one automatically enters the world of law, the law of humanity that distinguishes good from evil. And once violence becomes taboo for the self, the self creates the grounds for demanding an end to violence. Otherwise one deceives one's self and one's opponent[75]. Hence, all prophets forbade the use of violence in establishing a society of law, because one cannot establish such a society while one believes in the effectiveness of violence.

Law and violence are contradictory in nature. The prophets wanted to create a society in which individuals do not have to resort to personal self defense. They wanted a society in which the protection of its individuals came from their abiding respect to the prescribed and contracted law. Law, in this case, represents the third party mediating between the conflicting parties. Without such a mediator, the oppressor fears to lose his status and the oppressed wish to replace the oppressor; so they become caught in a repetitive rotation. The prophets realized, even if we still do not in our day, that oppressor and oppressed are the two sides of the same coin, locked in the same relationship of power, authority and violence. The fear of losing privilege, or the yearning for it, eats away at both sides: one side is locked in a constant anguish of losing while the other is immersed in an agonizing longing to acquire. Only the appearance of the third party can remove this rotation of hierarchy. Prophets, therefore, declared their own unilateral withdrawal from conflict even if it

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[75] *The Qur'an rejects double standards, and states that abiding by one standard for one's self and by another standard for the others is an odious wrong. "O you who believe! Why say you that which you do not. Grievously odious is it in the sight of God that you say that which you do not." Surah 61 A1 Saff: 2-3.*

T'he same standard is expressed in: "[S]o be careful to do whatever they tell you. But do not follow their practice; for they say one thing and do another." Matt 23:3.

meant that only one side was departing from violence, in order to lay the path for creating a civil society to abrogate the militant one. What prophets did and what peace activists do now is still beyond serious consideration and research by most intellectuals, and today our world continues to be locked in polarized conflicts with a marked absence of mediators, without the prophetic alternative society of the word of equity (kalimat assawa').

The Conditions for Violence in Islam

Forbidding self defense when one is persecuted by one's society and its representatives is perhaps what many find most problematic in my call for nonviolence, reviving the tradition of Adam's son, Socrates, and Muhammad to create desired social and political change. This central prophetic notion is still rejected in the world. Creating a third alternative to this polarized hierarchy between oppressor and oppressed was the mission of the prophets. Yet, if the prophetic method does not allow the founding of society through violence, some might question why there are many verses in the Qur'an that urge fighting and Jihad.

To understand the true message of the Qur'an on the use of violence, we must differentiate between (1) a society founded on force, violence and coercion and (2) a society founded on the rule of law, justice and legitimacy. The former society of force is the society that prophets wanted to eradicate in order to establish the latter kind of society, based on peaceful persuasion and lack of coercion and marked by the protection it provides to its members. Fighting or the use of force has, then, to be understood within the boundaries that define the distinctions between these two forms of governing. '

The conditions in the Qur'an for the use of force in a society founded on force include the following:

l. No fighting or killing is permitted to impose one's religion at any level, whether against a state or against individuals. The use of threats or intimidation to make one change his or her religion is completely rejected in Islam, though it is not exclusive to Islam. All true prophets have preached the same message because monotheism, as I have explained above, is not only a theological matter, but a sociopolitical issue. Monotheism teaches its followers to refuse to be instruments in the hands of those who want to impose their religion with force. It also teaches them to refuse to accept a religion imposed on them forcefully. The human soul is sacred and may not be murdered for the sake of ideas.

Thus, the Qur'an describes as true believers, "[T]hose who invoke not, with God, any other god, nor kill such life as God has made sacred . . . ." (Surah 25 AI Furqan: 68)

After discussing the regret that befell Adam's second son after killing his own brother, the Qur'an reads:

> *On that account, We ordained for the children of Israel that whoever kills a person, unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land, it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people*[76].

This is not only the message of all the Prophets but the natural consequence of the movement to include freedom of belief as an inalienable right in every democratic constitution.

2. When a society of free belief is founded and it has produced its institutions, it has the obligation to protect freedom of belief among people. It also has the obligation to protect their blood and money with justice, with the word of equity. Thus, the deimition of a just society implies the application of law equally to its members regardless of the nature of that society's laws. Some might object that such a definition is useless or relativistic, because each state will consider its application just. Yet, we can not judge the equity of any system by what its members say to justify it; rather, the results and the consequences of a system will be the witness to its equity or inequity.

A society of justice, when people rebel against it, has the right to prevent aggression by those who want to return it to a state of lawlessness, to the law of the jungle. This type of fighting is permitted in the Qur'an, because the just society has a legitimate right to self defense. "If two parties among the believers fall into quarrel, make peace between them: but if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other, then fight against the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of God; but if it complies, then make peace between them with justice, and be fair: for God loves those who are fair (and just)." (Surah ~9 A1 Hujurat: 9) Preventing aggression is the only violence allowed within a state of equity, and only when all other means have been exhausted. (Here I am referring specifically to physical aggression by those who want to impose their order through the use of force and not through intellectual instigation.) Aggression is to be stopped, through force if other means fail, for it breaches the state of law in a society.

It is important to repeat again and again that violence can be used in a society of justice only to stop those who kill people and exile them for their ideas or ethnicities, for it is the obligation of such a society "regardless of its name or nationality" to install justice among people. If such aggression occurs, we should not be misled by the religious affiliation of the rebels; we should not be misled by names or labels of piety, religiosity, or infidelity. "And say not to

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[76] *The passage continues: "then although there came to them our messengers with clear signs, yet, even after that, many of them continued to commit excesses in the land." Surah 5 Al Ma'idah: 35.*

anyone who offers you a salutation (of peace): `You are none of a believer! "' (Surah 4 Al Nisa': 94) There is, if fact, an Islamic term for such rebels against a just society: they are called the rebellious outsiders, (khawarij) or aggressors (bughat).

Moreover those who practice justice are practically speaking monotheistic because monotheism is about rejecting tyranny and injustice. Conversely, those who believe in tyranny are committing social polytheism, the sin that is never forgiven. That is why the verse commanding "no coercion in religion" is followed by the promise that

> *God is the ally (and protector) of those who have faith: from the depths of darkness He will lead them forth into light. Of those who reject faith their allies are the evil ones!: from light they will lead them forth into the depth of darkness . . . :' (Surah 2 Al Baqarah: 257)*

After the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) founded a society in Madinah, through moral, social and political persuasion, four khalifahs (Caliphs) ruled Madinah successively after his death. They did not abduct authority with the sword; nor did they make their position hereditary for their children. Muslims called these "Al ~hulafa ' a1rashidun" ("the rightly-Guided Caliphs"). It is interesting that no khalifah in Muslim history was ever labeled "rashid' (singular for rashidun) after that. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the practice stopped because all the other khalifahs came to power either through the sword or through heredity. This is possibly a collective statement by Muslims about the rule of the later khalifahs. This silence implies that even if Muslims could not bring back the political legitimacy of the early khalifahs, they did not lose their understanding of what is meant in the Qur'an by rushd. However, what is problematic in the Muslims' understanding of the era of rushd is that they do not see rushd as a human product. Instead, they understand it as the result of unusual divine intervention, a direct divine blessing on the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his companions. This is the grievous error that has befallen the Muslims in understanding their own history and tradition. Their sin of misunderstanding has been overtaken by developments in the modern world, where rushd has appeared through human creation in the form of late modern democracies.

The Qur'an clearly declares that the ruler who comes through coercion is not rashid (someone who is legitimately in power, morally and intellectually mature), but a taghut (tyrant) and is thus illegitimate. Yet, Muslims have failed to understand that reinstating governance with violence is illegitimate; so they regressed to accepting the use of violence in the making of political authority. They have therefore entered the circle of the law of the jungle once more; and from it, they have not been able to escape.

The promising exception to this vicious circle is the recent developments in Muslim politics in Turkey. Turkey accepted the democratic challenge, of all the countries in the Muslim World. It is also the same country that followed the example of Western secularization, and rejected religion in a revolution similar to those that took place in the West. However, this country that historically passed over the Muslim World by rejecting Islam and Islamic rule-which was no longer in a state of rushd-reinstated rushd. It accepted the notion of political authority through the path of legitimacy. If this pattern proliferates in the Muslim World, perhaps rushd has a chance of returning to it, just as Europe is entering a new moment of unity based on its own rushd, a unity based on legitimacy.

These historical events are significant in the movement of humanity at large. We should take their signals, moving to speed up the process of the return to "guidance" rather than fearing or retreating from them. Those who dread such a spread of democracy and equality only fear the loss of their privileges. They do not realize that they will not lose anything, but instead gain security.

3. The relationship between a society of justice and equity and an unjust society is subject to certain conditions. As suggested, the Qur'an demands that societies give up two practices:

A. The killing of people because of their ideas, beliefs, convictions and mental perceptions.

B. Exiling of people for the same reasons mentioned above.

The Qur'an is clear on this: "God forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not in religion nor drive you out of your homes, &om dealing kindly and justly with them: for God loves those who are just." (Surah 60 Al Mumtahinah: 8)

Similarly, if other societies "withdraw from you but fight you not, and (instead) send you (guarantees of) peace, then God has opened no way for you (to war against them). If they withdraw not from nor give you peace nor restrain their hands, seize them and kill them wherever you get them; in their case we have provided you with a clear authority (argument) against them." (Surah 4 Al Nisa': 90-91)

This is the charter of fighting in the Qur'an, and all the verses in the Qur'an that deal with fighting or the use of force are constrained within these specific limits. Any society that does not practice either one of these two evils-killing and exiling people because of the ideas they carry-is protected and beyond reproach according to the Qur'an[77]. Hence, any fighting outside the boundaries

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[77] *The Qur'an says: "1'hose who believe fight in the cause of God, and those who disbelieve fight in the cause of tyranny: so fight against the allies of Satan: feeble indeed is the cunning of Satan." Surah 4 A1 Nisa: 76.*

of these conditions is rendered tyrannical, and turns into a fighting for taghut. It becomes similar to the fighting of jahiliyah, the age (of ignorance) preceding Islam, and not the kind of fighting the Qur'an decreed.

As long as there is murdering and exiling of people because of their opinions, the Qur'an decrees that a society of justice-which has founded itself legitimately-has distinct power to stop such persecution and to use violence as a last resort. In summary, we could say that fighting is allowed in the Qur'an in two conditions, one regarding the society that uses force, the other regarding the society against which force is used. The society that uses force has to be a society founded legitimately through peaceful means. 'The society against which force is used has to be murdering people and exiling them. Therefore, if the world no longer has a society that commits such atrocities, fighting would cease. Once people enter the word of equity, war is obsolete and people will coexist in a world of peace.

Understanding the conditions of the use of force in the Qur'an better would allow us to understand what happened to Muslims as to many other previous nations. In many places, Muslims articulated and developed their culture after they had lost rushd and adapted to the ways of ghay. Hence, they legitimated the making of political authority through violence. They were incapable of comprehending social change through persuasion, albeit yearning nostalgically for the age of rushd and the prophetic model. This age has taken on a certain significance in the Muslim collective imagination. Yet, it is also a period that is placed beyond history and therefore marked with an absence of analysis of the laws and factors that enabled the Prophet to create such a society.

Perhaps what also caused Muslims' confusion regarding the issues of force and legitimacy is their failure to distinguish the contexts of war and peace. They could not and still do not differentiate the contexts in which the use of force is allowed and the contexts in which even self defense is absolutely forbidden. Hence, the verses and Hadith about force are not understood within notions of legitimacy and within the rules that sanction the use of force in the Qur'an. The constant references in both the Qur'an and Hadith to the sanctity of using arms are, therefore, presented in Islamic tradition without an accompanying analysis about prerequisites and conditions that sanction violence. In one instance, for example, the Prophet praises the use of arms to the point where he says that God would admit three persons to paradise with one arrow: its maker, its carrier, and its archer. Yet, what escapes Muslims is the abundance of Hadith that prohibit the use of arms to the point where the Prophet orders the destruction of one's arms, even if unilaterally, and to rid one's self of one's sword.

A closer look at what may appear as self contradictory commands discloses that the command to take up arms is subject to the context and conditions of fighting discussed above. In fact, there are no contradictions if one understands

the rules and circumstances that decree violence and the rules and conditions that prohibit it. Similarly, there is great consistency between the Qur'an, the Hadith and the Prophet's behavior when it comes to the use of force. Notions such as fitna (disorder) and baghy (aggression) are juristic terms. The Prophet was referring to such times when he said: "Break your arrow and cut its bow and hit your sword on a rock." He even commanded taking refuge in the mountains or tending one's own business.

There is a discernable body of Hadith that deals with the issue of social disorder and the abstinence from violence. In one Hadith, the Prophet addressed Abi Dhar when he asked:

> *`Do not I take up my sword?' The Prophet said: `You, then, would have participated with these people (becoming their accomplice).' Abu Dhar, then asked: `So, what do you order me to do?' The Prophet said: `If you fear the glittering of the sword, throw your garment over your face so that [the aggressor] carries the onus of your sin as well as his[78].*

However the Hadith dealing with limits on the use of violence in social disorder are rarely, if ever, quoted in Islamic scholarship. There are of course reasons for this omission. People who adapt to the ways of tyranny (taghut) cannot benefit from their sacred texts or what the Prophets established. The entire Islamic tradition, except for the Qur'an, was written after Muslims lost the mode of governance based on rushd. Alas, the Islamic tradition adapted to the age of tyranny rather than the model established by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). My wonder at this fact ceased when I realized how Western thought was also captured by the age of tyranny, and has never adapted to the message of Jesus.

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[78] As just some of the best examples of this body of Hadith, read the following: taken from the abridgement of Abi Dawood by the al-Hafiz al-Mundhiri, edition of (Publishers of Sunna Mohammadia 1949), at page 142 section 6 under the numbers 4090, 4093, and 4095 (placed here in the same order).

The Prophet said, `There will be disorder where that who is lying down is better than who is sitting, that who is sitting is better than that who is standing and that who is standing is better than who is walking. The one walking is better than one running.' They said: `What do you demand of us in such a time?' The prophet said: `Those who have camels should attend them, and those who have sheep should go after their sheep, and those who have land should take care of it.' They said: `If one does not have any of such.' He said: `Then he should take his sword, hit its edge on a rock and save himself to the best of his ability.' (produced by Bukhari and Muslim).

They said, `Prophet of God, what if he entered my house and stretched his hand to kill me!' He said: `Be like the son of Adam', and he read the verses from the Qur'an, `If you stretch your hand to kill me, I will not kill thee, for I fear God . . . .' Surah 5 Al Ma'idah: 31.

The Prophet said: "I see fintnas (states of disorder) coming like the pieces of a dark night where a man wakes up a believer and goes into the evening an infidel and goes into the evening a believer and wakes up an infidel. The sitting ones are better than the standing. And the walking ones are better than the running. So, break your bows and cut your strings and hit your swords on rocks. If you are attacked, be like the better son of Adam.

The legitimatization of the use of violence and killing to create political change in the Western civilization has also supported the continuity of this line of political thought. It reified Post-Qur'anic Islamic notions about political change, and has resulted in constant attempts to bring back rushd through revolution. But since violence has become taboo in modern Western democratic political behavior, it has created intellectual and political contradictions similar to those in the history of Muslims. Thus, even if violence has become prohibited as a means of changing rulers or amending bills of law, ideas about the legitimacy of violence and revolution are revered at the level of historical political discourse.

Such a world of peace is not a utopian illusion. It has actually become possible if not urgent. Just as slavery was abolished, which was a consequence of war, so will war be abolished. Instead, human energies could be put into competition for inventing instruments that would communicate the lessons of humanity's struggles and efforts to the people. It is the lack of knowledge and understanding of events that leads people to misconceptions and therefore to misconduct; it is false ideas that lead them to hatred and bloodshed.

Coming to terms with the philosophical implications in the prophetic method of social and political change will put the world into a truly new order based on equity and will resolve such intellectual dilemmas. Big and small tyrannies will collapse. It is the role of intellectuals to disclose the extent of the gap that separates the world from religion and democracy, because we live in a world were religion is understood as coercion and compulsion and law as the acceptance of privilege. As coercion negates religion, privilege negates law. The call of prophets has to be addressed in a new light to validate and enforce people's trust in religion, law and humanity.

Humanity now lives a crisis of trust. If the world is silent about the deformation of the meaning of religion and law, history does not spare those who ignore its laws: "Such is the chastisement of your Lord when He chastises communities in . the midst of their injustice: grievous, indeed, and severe is his chastisement." (Surah 11 Hud: 102)

The Qur'an reminds us that those who do not take lessons from history will themselves become lessons for others. The movement of history will not stop for them, for God will give their inheritance to others, and "neither heaven nor earth [will] shed a tear over them[79]." "[T]hey were unjust to themselves

79 The entire passage reads:

`Thus (was their end)! And We gave their inheritance to other people. And neither heaven nor earth shed a tear over them: nor were they given respite (again).' Surah 44 AI Dukhan: 29. `Then sent We our messengers in succession: every time there came to a people their messenger, they accused him of falsehood: so We made them follow each other (in punishment): We made them as a tale (that is told): so way with a people that will not believe.' Surah 23 AI Mu'minun: 44.

(therein). At length We made them as tales (that are told) and We dispersed them all in scattered fragments.

Verily in this are signs for everyone that is patiently constant and grateful." (Surah 34 Saba': 19)

Our history is, alas, still a fulfillment of the angels' predictions about our species. Human relationships based on equity and compassion rather than power are still seen by some Western thinkers as a radical challenge to Western culture and to all world cultures. This is because the authentic experiences of such relationships practiced with prophetic consciousness are marginalized and fall outside historical analysis. Intellectuals of our time view those who have led movements toward equity and justice, particularly those who were murdered for their ideas such as Adam's son, Socrates, Jesus and Gandhi, as victims of their ideals. What they overlook is the intellectual seeds these figures left behind. The condemnation of violence in our age, even if it is only at a rhetorical level, is some indication that killing is declining as a heroic model worthy of reverence. Thus, the blood of Adam's son did not go to waste. The cry of his blood is read by millions of men, women and children in the world even if they do not comprehend its significance and implications now:

> *Cain said to his brother Abel, `Let us go out into the country.' Once there, Cain attacked and murdered his brother . . . . The Lord said, `What have you done? Your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground. Now you are accursed and will be banished from the very ground which has opened its mouth to receive the blood you have shed . . . .' Cain said to the Lord, `My punishment is heavier than I can bear.' (Gen 4:8-14)*

And they will remember also the words of Adam's son:

> *If you do stretch your hand to kill me, I (surely) will not stretch my hand to kill you: for I fear God, the cherisher of the worlds (of all). I intend to let you draw on yourself my sin as well as yours, for you will be among the companions of the Fire, and that is the reward of those who are unjust (aggressors). (Surah 5 A1 Ma'idah: 31-32)*

Figuratively speaking, we are the descendants of the killer son, but we started to realize ways of becoming the descendants of the other son, with an increasing reverence for the nervous system and the realm of the intellect.

A Return to the Text

The Muslim World has had its problematic relationship with text. It did not see that the text was removed from reality by language, a' fact which must be analyzed further to bring back a positive role for the sacred texts rather than the

debilitating role they play presently. We see a radically different attitude toward the text from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who was explaining to Ziad ibn Labeed some misfortunes that were going to befall Muslims. He said, "And that [misfortune] would take place when knowledge dissolves." Ziad ibn Labeed, the companion said: "How could knowledge dissolve while we study the Qur'an and we teach it to our children and our children will teach it to their children?" The Prophet responded, "Woe unto you Ibn Labeed. I thought of you as one of the bright minds of Madina. Are not the Torah and the Bible in the hands of the Jews and the Christians, who are reading them but are not benefiting from their content?![80]" In this exchange between the Prophet and his companion, we see a methodic and objective dialogue. Here, the Prophet is not speaking of metaphysical realities or revealed truth. Rather, he is talking about a lived reality by making reference to history and social behavior. When his companion objects that knowledge cannot be lost while texts exist, the Prophet does not use a divine reference to prove his point, nor does he use his status as a prophet. Instead, he refers his companion to a witnessed society within which they live and to those who have lost the ability to benefit from their texts when they have neglected to observe reality outside text.

The Prophet's presentation of the relationship of text to life is significant. He presents the issue as a social law and a social pattern in societies that lose touch with events and objective reality. These societies hold on to text and words without looking at what the words refer to[81]. Here we see how the Qur'an brings the issue of illiteracy to another level. According to the Qur'an, it is not necessarily a reference to persons who cannot read and write, but to those who halt before the letters of the words. Words are signifiers but what they signify is subject to change. The words "heaven" and "earth," for example, did not in themselves change in all world languages throughout the ages. What they refer to, and the mental perceptions these words trigger, have changed profoundly. Thus, text is a malleable entity. Hence, societies appropriate, empty, refill and even reinvent new meanings of text and what the text signifies.

The problem of text lies in interpretation, and is intertwined with the way a society handles new information about the universe, life, history and society, because these same phenomena are not the signified realities to which these texts had once referred. Language itself is a making of the human mind. It is symbols that facilitate the transmission of information, just as societies invented currency to make financial transactions. The symbols themselves do not carry the meanings. By agreeing on the relationship between a symbol and what it refers to, we provide meaning. Thus, sometimes, the words do not correspond

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[80] . Note: this Hadith is from Masnad Ibn Ahxnad, and was corrected in the "Tafseer" of Ibn Katheer in Surat 5 Ma'idah: 59: 66.

[81] The Qur'an also provides a definition of the illiterate person, who espouses this attitude towards text: b"And there are among them illiterates, who know not the Book, but (see therein their own) desires, and they do nothing conjecture." Surah 2 A1 Baqarah: 78.

with our intentions. We might say that our trust is in God, when in reality it is in muscles and gold[82]. Yet, ultimately, our problems do not lie in any text or within the human person. Rather, they lie in our failure to present historical knowledge holistically, without discontinuities. We need to understand history on an evolutionary continuum, not as fragmented pieces, nor short glimpses of a given age. We have, throughout history, played with texts and words. However, history is irreverent to our mishaps and misinterpretations, for the laws that govern history do not change nor do they alter: "No change will you find in God's sunna (law and pattern). No alteration will you find in God's sunna." (Surah 35 Fatir: 43)

Once we distinguish between the images and perceptions in our heads, on the one hand, and external events, on the other, and further understand the relationship between the two, we will come closer to solving humanity's problem. And once we can provide humanity with more authentic references and standards with more objectivity, we will open a path of benefit and utility for humanity[83]. By doing this, we can liberate humanity from the vagueness of text and the inherently inconstant nature of its meaning. And instead of rejecting text or reality, we will come to an understanding of the relationship that binds them, since text is a carrier of the meaning of reality and is in constant flux. This will lead to a different relationship between humanity and the universe. We will then see the universe as a creative source equal to our own curiosity and ability to utilize its resources.

The problem in the human condition is humanity's inability and struggle to adapt to history, which supercedes humanity and leaves it behind. This is due to the prevalence of the arbitrary movement of knowledge beyond authority. The Prophets knew how to utilize human cognition, relating to it the meaning of the universe and succeeded in creating massive human movements. It is unfortunate that intellectuals, the inheritors of prophetic voice, have not yet succeeded or adapted to such capacity and skill. Intellectuals have lost the significance of sacredness or goodness in existence. We have to compete in inventing the simplest, most economic ways of creating a new consciousness that will construct a new paradigm. We are using here the notion of "paradigm" the way

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[82] *For example, the Bible says:*
What hypocrites! How right Isaiah was when he prophesied about you: This people pays me lip.service, but their heart is far from me. Matt 15:7-8.
HEAR how wisdom calls and understanding lifts her voice . . . . `For wisdom is better than red coral and no jewel can match her.' `I am wisdom, I bestow shrewdness and show the way to knowledge and discretion.' `My harvest is better than even than fine gold, and my revenue better than choice silver.' `I follow the course ofjustice and keep to the path of equity.' Prov 8:1, 11-12, 19-20.

[83] *By wisdom the LORD laid the earth's foundations and by understanding he set the heavens in place; by his knowledge the springs of the deep burst forth and the clouds dropped dew. My son, safeguard soundjudgement and discretion; do not let them out of your sight. They will be a charm hung about your neck, and ornament to grace your throat. Then you will go on your way without a care, and your foot will not stumble. When you sit, you need have no fear; when you lie down, your sleep will be pleasant. Prov 19-24.*

Thomas Kuhn used it in his book, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, to present the structural evolution of science[84].

In the arms race, we see how ignorance is exploited in marketing obsolete commodities. It is unfortunate that we live in an age where there are too many parties willing to exploit the absence of consciousness instead of finding ways to spread it. The intellectual who is competent to perform the role of the messenger has not yet appeared and has not yet been able to utter the words of Moses: "look at the god you have been worshiping . . . ." (Surah 20 Ta Ha: 97)

Muhammad Iqbal, the Pakistani poet and philosopher, discusses the crisis of the modern age in some of his writings. In one of his poems, he dreams about the intellectual who will play the role of Moses. Iqbal demands an intellectual who is concerned not with attacking religion but with analyzing the age in which we live, shaking its premises, exposing its foundations and stripping off its illusionary masks. Indeed, the illusions of the modern world are somewhat reminiscent of the works of Pharaoh's magicians who kept people captives. "Said Moses: `Throw you (first) so when they threw, they bewitched the eyes of the people, and struck terror into them: for they showed a great (fear of) magic.' (Surah 7 A1 A'raf 116)[85] This represents the problematic relationship to text the Prophet was discussing with his companion.

Thus, claims of human rights and equality, at the discursive level, do not represent actual events just the way sacred texts ceased to benefit their upholders. Our ideals are invalidated when we think we can govern the world with terror instead of knowledge, with coercion instead of compassion. A young woman, who was a graduate of a high academic institution, came to see me to inquire whether sorcery was true. She had come to believe that her mother-in-law bewitched her. I found myself telling her that sorcery is a global problem. Entire nations are bewitched, and the world's intellectuals leave people under the spell of the magic of force without exposing the mere sticks and ropes that it is, in just the way the magicians of Pharaoh deluded people about their power.

When Louis Pasteur was looking in vinegar bottles to understand the way organic corruption occurs in biological entities, people were dying around him of different contagious diseases. But for Pasteur, mourning the dead was a less effective way of understanding the mechanisms of disease. Similarly, those who look into our cultural bottles will be able to discover the small mental entities spread in our intellectual food and sanctified cultures, enabling us to practice intellectual hygiene. Just as we discovered how to disinfect and pasteurize our food, we will be able to disinfect our cultural materials from the germs that lead to the murder of people at the hands of their own brothers. And as such, we

84 Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago: U. of Chi. Press 1962).
85 "(Moses) said, `Nay, throw you first! Then behold their ropes and their rods-so it seemed to him on account of their magic-began to be in lively motion! "' Surah 20 Ta Ha: 66.

should also find methods of mental anesthesia, so that our operations will be less painful when we remove harmful tissues, i.e., nullify harmful ideas and notions. When people were ignorant of germ theory and the mechanisms of disease, it was possible for one to catch a disease from a loved one who would cry and mourn his loss. We are still at that level culturally. People have always been preached to, during Sunday sermons, to love their enemies; yet, they did not feel the contradiction when they sanctioned the burning of those who disagreed with them in opinion. Has it become possible to place such an intellectual germ under the microscope? Is it yet possible to analyze and understand the cultural environment in which such a germ flourishes? We devote certain amounts of funds to researching AIDS and cancer to gain control over them. Most people are concerned and follow the results of such efforts closely. But do we yet have advanced consciousness and popular interest at similar levels for intellectual health?[86]

The World Health Organization published a booklet about "facts of life," which isolated ten known preventable diseases that take the lives of a quarter of a million infants per week in the world. Yet the difficulties in disseminating this information to the mothers, who take care of these children, means that we have not eradicated those diseases. The booklet describes how communicating this information in a simplified manner by various and repetitive sources would shift maternal convictions that would result in live-saving behavioral changes. Will we have experts who will determine the number of intellectual "diseases" which lead to bloodshed and the exiling of millions in the world? And more significantly, will the public have the will to ensure that such knowledge reaches mothers, so that they are convinced to instill those values in their children?

We need to know the level of effort needed to reduce violence and each has to ask himself and herself, how can I contribute to the eradication of the disease of violence which has been left on its own to spread without needed intervention?

In this article, I have tried to shed light on one disease, which I believe can be cured through the prophetic path. It is the disease of accepting coercion as a means to changing human behavior. Misinterpreting existence leads to nihilism and therefore to misunderstanding the human condition as well. We live in world that still largely thinks coercion and compulsion bring about results instead of justice and compassion. This misunderstanding has grown as the result of a misinterpretation of justice. People think justice is a form of loss

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[86] . *In the World Health Organization, for example, there are detailed reports that criticize and expose military expenditures at the expense of other humane fields. This is a subtle move towards studying systematically the consequences of militancy.*

while equality is a sacrifice of status and privilege. These fears represent the satanic world-view, which is based on hubris and condescension.[87]

The heart does not heal unless it is cleaned of conceit and its love of privilege. This healing cannot be accomplished without an understanding of human equality as a mathematical equation: the solution lies in ensuring the equality of both sides of the equation. Let those who do not believe this continue on their path, for the days will convince them how knowledge heals the heart and how big is the path it opens and how intense the life it provides the self. They will see how God provided "a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." (Gen 3:24)[88] By understanding the interconnectedness of faith and knowledge, one connects earth and heaven, and religion no longer stays in the realm of preaching. Rather, through direct practical observation of reality, knowledge will turn into faith and faith into knowledge. Say: "Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know? It is those who are endowed with understanding that recollect." (Surah 39 Al Zumar: 9)

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[87] *As the Bible says: "Pride goes before disaster [destruction], and arrogance before a fall. Better live humbly with those in need than divide the spoil with the proud . . . but happy is he who puts his trust in the LORD." Prov 16:18-20.*

The Qur'an also says, "The Day whereon neither wealth nor children will avail. But only that (will prosper) that brings to God a sound (pure) heart." Surah 26 A1 Shu'ara': 88-89.

[88] *From the King James version.*